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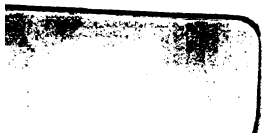
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Henry Howe
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THE PARRICIDE;

OR,

THE YOUTH'S CAREER OF CRIME.

BY GEORGE W. M. REYNOLDS,

AUTHOR OF "THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON," "MASTER TIMOTHY'S BOOK-CASE,"
"FAUST," "WAGNER: THE WEHR-WOLF," "PICKWICK ABROAD,"
"THE MODERN LITERATURE OF FRANCE," "ROBERT MACAIRE," &c.

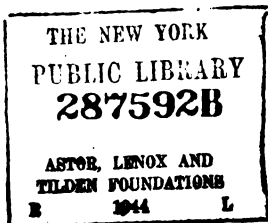
ILLUSTRATED WITH TWENTY-TWO WOOD ENGRAVINGS,

DESIGNED BY GEORGE STANDFAST.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED FOR THE PROPRIETOR, BY JOHN DICKS,
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1847.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author, when only eighteen years of age, wrote a novel entitled "THE YOUTHFUL IMPOSTOR," which was published in three volumes, in 1835, the author then being twenty-one. This work he has since completely remodelled, incorporating with it almost the whole of the episode involving the adventures of Sophia Maxwell; and the Tale, in its new and—it is hoped—*improved* form, is now issued to the public under the more appropriate title of "THE PARRICIDE."

LONDON, *May*, 1847.

C. Howe 29 June 1844

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THE PARRICIDE.



Hark! where the owl shrieks on the lonely road, and the wing of the bat sweeps against the trees; while loud and frequent gusts of wind come shouting—bellowing—howling down from those dense, black clouds, the cradle of the storm! Are there not voices—unearthly voices, mingling with that blast which comes in all the fury of its despotic power? Hear ye not the moans and the lamentations of Nature—conveyed by the myriad tones in which she speaks in her wrath—as if deploring the fall of one of her children?

For, Oh! heavy is the fall of the body of

flesh and blood—a dull—ominous—dreadful sound, such as the fall of no other object in creation gives forth: a sound that sends the vital fluid cold as Spitzbergen's water, back to the harrowing heart—makes the hair bristle up—and raises, as if by the waving of an enchanter's wand, a thousand appalling spectres, evermore to haunt the MURDERER! Withering is the curse that must attend on his footsteps—the footsteps of him,—the slayer of a being fashioned after the image of the Omnipotent! Tremendous thought:—can the human mind endure it? Can the foul murderer support the awful burthen? And yet men drag on their wretched lives—pursued by the phan-

toms of their victims. Yes:—but, though the earth have lapped up the spilt blood—and though the corse have rotted in the ground, and returned to dust and ashes,—though, also, justice hath not clenched the assassin with its iron grasp, and his fellow-men suspect not, when they gaze upon his countenance, that within his breast beats the heart of a murderer,—still—still is his punishment going on—aye—even in this life!

Whithersoever he goes, a grisly spectre pursues him—accompanies him—precedes and follows him with incomprehensible ubiquity—hems him in all around. Does he behold a stain on his garment, even though it be of fruit—yet to his morbid eye it appears like *blood*! When the sun rises in glory, or sets in splendour, he sees not the orange, the purple, the golden, and the warm yellow tints:—to him the sun appears to rise or to set in *blood*! If he read in a newspaper or a romance the narrative of a murder, the type is not black to his swimming eyes: the details seem printed in *blood*! Even at the festival—the gay banquet—or the family entertainment, if he say, “I will pledge thee in this good red wine,”—that moment the spectre stoops and whispers in his ear—“No: it is *blood*!”

No rest—no repose for him! Though men see not the brand of Cain upon his brow—yet he feels it—he knows it is there: it is like hot iron on his brow—iron heated red, and cooling never! He washes his hand—his friend takes it—his wife presses it—his children kiss it,—and to them it may seem white and spotless;—but to him it is not the less the red right hand of Murder!

Let him go down on his knees—and pray! He pray!—no—no—he cannot—he dares not! Is he not on a level with Cain! in defacing the image of God, has he not placed himself in the same rank with Judas? Can such an one pray? Why—let him but kneel in the solitude of his chamber, and he dares not bury his face in his hands,—for, is there not a hideous spectre standing behind him—looking over his shoulder? To him the stillness of night is awful. And how horrible to his ear sounds the bell which proclaims the hour of—ONE! That deep—deep silence, a moment broken by the iron tongue of TIME, is succeeded by a silence more dreadful—more appalling still. Then must he turn on his feverish couch, and murmur to himself in a hollow—hoarse—sepulchral tone, “This was the hour!” And the spectre—ever vigilant near him—thrusts its skeleton-head between the curtains, and echoes in a tone more hollow—more hoarse—and more sepulchral still, “Yes: this was the hour!”

Oh! for the days of innocence,—Oh! for power to recall those stainless years, when the imagination saw every thing in the gayest colours, and not as through a dense mist of the hue of blood! Oh! to return to that epoch when fancy embroidered the frail web of exist-

ence with inexhaustible arabesques, instead of being chained to one thought—and that thought, MURDER!

But there are murders of various grades; for even in the lowest depths of crime, there is a deeper still. For there be assassinations for jealousy—revenge—in self-defence—or through sudden anger,—as well as murders for gold—to conceal a crime—to remove the object of satisfied lust—or to enhance a variety of worldly objects,—aye—and murders in war, too—for war is but one tremendous scene of barbarian assassinations! And there is also the murder which the law allows—the murder of a culprit on the scaffold,—the murder, by the hand of the public executioner, of one who, though criminal, has not the less been fashioned in the image of God! All these are atrocious—detestable—horrible. Can there be a murder more atrocious—more detestable—more horrible than any of all of these? Yes—there is one from which even common murderers—Burkers—bravoes—hired assassins—poisoners, would shrink dismayed: and this is—PARRICIDE!

The father dandles his infant boy upon his knee—smoothes down his glossy, shining, curling hair—*forgets* even the dignity of his own proud position of MAN, and responds with fond nonsense to the prattle of his little one. To that child only, of all living things, can the father stoop to tell silly tales or utter idle nothings—to throw off his calm, staid, business-like demeanour, and become a child himself,—aye,—even romp with that dearly-beloved offspring. Then, what gives pleasure to the pain of the father’s toils? The hope to earn bread or build up a fortune for that child. Oh! the anxious—waking—watchful hours which the fond father passes! And how great is the reward he reaps, when his smiling—prattling—joyous—happy boy bounds to meet him at his well-known knock at the front door, and extends his little arms to greet his “dear papa!” Holy heaven! Can that child grow up to become—a parricide? Can those little hands ever have nerve sufficient to clasp the knife that shall be plunged into that paternal heart which has ached so often for the sake of this child? Can that child grow up to become a man capable of the most atrocious deed? Is human nature ever so base that it would seek to stifle the light of the orb of day, which warms and cheers its existence? And with the knowledge—the deeply-stamped conviction that there is a great God above, whose representative a father is on earth—

—But it is impossible to pursue this theme! The heart recoils from the reflection that there is such a crime as PARRICIDE!

And yet there is!

* * * * *

SEDUCTION! Art thou, too, amidst the fell category of crimes whereof it is our painful

province to treat in the forthcoming pages? Alas! thou art a blight which falls on many—Oh! too many—of Nature's fairest flowers! Gently glides the serpent whose sting is most surely fraught with death; and insidious are the wiles of the fame-blasting seducer! Oh! is the heart of woman—dear, fond, confiding woman—too often the worst spring of sorrow? Accursed be the villain who dares to tamper with that heart which God originally made so pure! Maledictions on him who can calmly sing the dirge of her reputation! For who that sees the brow of innocence encircled with a chaplet of white roses, would ruthlessly stretch forth his hand and tear away the fairest flower to gratify himself for a moment—a single moment—with its perfume—that perfume which his own lust-heated breath destroys at the same time?—who could do this, and then boldly raise his head and say, "I am a Man!" while the outraged girl lies, a ruined and life-loathing thing, at his feet?

CHAPTER I.

his forehead high and pale,
The sable curls in wild profusion veil.

Tho' smooth his voice, and calm his general mien,
Still seems there something he would not have seen:
His features' deepening lines, and varying hue
At times attracted, yet perplexed the view,
As if within that murkiness of mind
Work'd feelings dreadful, and still undread'd.

BYRON.

ABOUT twenty years ago, there was situated a neat, though humble dwelling, some four or five miles on the London side of Bagshot. If its interior could not boast the royal splendour of nobles' palaces, it at least possessed comforts adequate to the wants and ideas of the principal inmates—we say principal, because one was dissatisfied, restless, and unhappy.

It was in the summer time, when the epoch of this tale commences; and the jessamine hung luxuriantly over the portico. As the house retired nearly three dozen yards from the main road, a small garden filled the intermediate space. There bloomed the rose, the pink, the geranium, the wall-flower, and the magnificent peony: while divers other plants, shrubs, and botanic productions, of various colours, and of variegated species, afforded an agreeable spectacle to the eye of the traveller, and evinced the care which some female hand had taken of them.

The hour of sunset was now drawing near: a golden glow pervaded the western horizon, tinged the morning of another hemisphere, and heralded in the wing of night to ours.

Few were the sounds that interrupted the stillness of the evening: the occasional bleating of the sheep, as their guardian led them over the adjacent meadows to their fenced tenement—the transitory bark of an angry dog—or the step of a passing horse at intervals, alone broke the silence of the hour;—and while the God of day gradually sank down, Nature seemed to fall asleep by degrees in unison with him.

Presently the door of the cottage opened; and a youth, probably nineteen or twenty years of age,

issued from the dwelling, and slowly paced the garden walk. His air was thoughtful, and somewhat melancholy: the long black lashes, which shaded his dark eyes, pointed to the ground—for he appeared to be wrapped in the deepest contemplation.

When he had gained the gate, he partially roused himself, and gazed wistfully up the road towards London, as well as the increasing duskiess of the evening would permit.

His figure, which was above the middle height, yet well if not gracefully formed, was bent over the palings, and his eye remained fixed upon the direction its glance had ere now taken.

Suddenly the sounds of a horse's feet approached; the steps came nearer and nearer; and in another minute a traveller dismounted at the gate. He was a man who had perchance seen forty summers—one, that by exercise and repeated practice was accustomed to deeds requiring the greatest dexterity often mingled with daring, and consequently allied to danger. But his bosom could allow no sentiment of fear to enter its recesses; it was hardened to everything save the impression which beauty can make even on the savage monarch of the woods. The sharp flint is softer than the heart that bosom contained. His features, though not absolutely regular, would have been pleasing, had not his countenance seemed peculiarly marked with a studied sternness, calculated to repel the overtures of even the most impudent stranger in the world. But his manners were, notwithstanding, open and condescending to those he liked; and his bearing pronounced him to be a gentleman.

With warmth and graciousness he extended his hand to the youth who so anxiously awaited his arrival: he then conducted his horse round to the stable, by means of a narrow lane, which, running by the side of the garden, from which it was separated by a small quick-hedge, led to the back of the house.

"I thought you would never have come, Mr. Arnold," said the young man, as he struck a light for the candle he had already procured from a shelf in the stable. "I watched at the window till I was tired, and then descended to the garden. Here is the bag in its usual place; there is an abundance of provender, as you will find," he added, pointing to a corner of the stable.

"I was detained by Rivingstone, at Hounslow, my boy," returned the other in a kind voice, which appeared to accord but indifferently with the expression of his countenance.

"There is nothing on hand, however, is there?"

"I will tell you more anon, James: and as sure as your name is Crawford, I have something for your private ear which will delight you—a plan, a scheme, that will enrich us for ever, without endangering our necks."

"If Rivingstone be the founder of it," said Crawford, for such was the youth's name, "I dare swear it will be successful: and your last assurance is some comfort; for I would not have a repetition of that horrible night, when——"

He shuddered as he shook his head significantly, while his usually pale cheek received a spectral hue from the working of certain internal emotions.

"Peace, peace, my boy!" cried Arnold, glancing impatiently upon the individual for whom, it seemed, he had taken a great fancy "Why will

you constantly recal such scenes to your memory?"

"Because that memory is immortal!" solemnly rejoined Crawford.

"Damnation!" thundered his companion: "I fancied you had the courage of a lion; why exemplify the spirit of a spaniel?"

"I am bold—and to crime!" emphatically exclaimed James, raising his head, collecting himself, and looking proudly at his companion.

"But how are the ladies?" enquired Arnold, willing to change the conversation to a livelier and far different strain.

"As usual—always tormenting me upon what they call my altered looks and pensive demeanour; as if one were obliged to *rouge* himself daily, and laugh at nothing—and all this to appear gay! Gay, indeed—how I hate the word *gay*: folly, ignorance, and ill-timed mirth are its component parts, in my view of the matter."

"Yes, forsooth. But how I dread the piercing eyes of those women. Still, my dear James, I can trust you: shield yourself well with the garment of hypocrisy. Be upon your guard, and fail not to study how to conceal yourself under false colours."

"Never fear, my friend," answered the worthy pupil of such an excellent moral master. "Although I am but a youth, my mind is that of a man; and its daring is equal to its experience—aye, or even greater.—However, you have now amply provided for the comforts of your horse—mine has been already attended to—" he pointed to another in the next stall: "let us therefore pay some regard to our own dinner, which has waited only for you."

"Or supper, you should say," added Arnold, as they left the stable, crossed the court, and entered the dwelling.

They hastily ascended the stairs, and passed through an empty room which led them to the parlour, where a table was spread for the repast alluded to.

And was that all to grace the apartment? Oh! no—for never did mortal eye glance upon so fair a being as the girl that sate reading upon a sofa. Long, luxuriant curls of the jettiest dye, glittering like hyperions, flowed over her ivory shoulders, which rather a low gown partially exposed, as well as allowing transient glimpses of the whitest bosom in the world. Her eyes were not particularly large, but dark, like her brother's, and replete with fire and vivacity. Her complexion was healthy and clear. Her nose was exactly strait—her mouth small to a fault: and the vermilion lips, when opened, disclosed a set of the whitest teeth. Her figure was small and delicate, and as exquisitely proportioned as the critical eye of the most experienced sculptor could desire. Her little hands were employed in holding a book which she had been reading, but which was instantly laid aside when Arnold and his young companion entered the room.

"Ah!" Mr. Arnold, how delighted—how happy I am to see you," exclaimed the beautiful girl, rising gaily, and clasping the hand of the visitor in her own; for she had scarcely seen sixteen years, and was accustomed to regard him almost as a parent. "James said he expected you to day, and we have waited anxiously for your arrival. My mother will be here directly—and Emily also."

"'Tis well, my pretty Kate," returned Arnold, as he threw himself into a chair. "And what have been your amusements since I saw you last?"

"I have almost finished the drawing you admired so much, Mr. Arnold; and my sister Emily has commenced the copy herself: she will do it better, of course, because she is two years older than I, you know."

"Indeed, that does not follow," rejoined Arnold, smiling at the amiable *naïvete* of Catherine.

At this moment the door opened; and her mother and elder sister entered the room.

Mrs. Crawford was a woman of nearly forty years of age in reality; but on her cheek lingered the bloom of youth, struggling with the advance of time, and anxious to retain its place, like the autumn flower combating against the nipping frosts which question its right to live. She had evidently been, if possible, more beautiful than her elder daughter, who chiefly resembled her parent, and of whom something shall be said presently; although a wrinkle were traced upon that parent's brow—almost imperceptible, it is true—still that line was there; and the hand of sorrow had marked it!

We must now give our reader an idea, to the best of our endeavours, of James Crawford's elder sister, Emily.

She was naturally of a less lively, and more retired disposition than Catherine; and perhaps an easier victim on that account for the insidious arts of the seducer—a being ever ready to pluck the virgin flower of innocence, and dash the ruined blossom to the ground after satiation. Her eyes were dark blue, and were characterised by a voluptuous languor that would have afforded ample scope for the effusions of a Catullus, or the encomiums of an Ovid. Her figure was less exquisitely shaped than that of her sister, although more modelled to the mature symmetry of womanhood. Her glowing bosom rose and sank rapidly, when her glance met the eye of Arnold; for despite the inequality of their years, he had obtained over her an influence, and exercised with regard to her a power of fascination, which had excited within her breast the most tender—the most impassioned love.

Did his heart respond to that profound affection? Emily knew not:—he had never told her that he loved her. And yet his manner, whenever they were alone together, was marked by that tenderness which was well calculated to inspire her with hope. Before her relatives, however, he paid no more attention to her than to her sister; and this conduct on his part often damped the pleasure Emily felt in his society, and deteriorated from the joy she would otherwise have experienced in meeting him.

Still he now greeted her as warmly as he had greeted Catherine; and perhaps he pressed with a little more enthusiasm the delicate hand held out to welcome his arrival.

Arnold was well skilled in reading the human character, and in penetrating into its mysteries.

The breast of no one was altogether a sealed book to him; for when he could glean nothing by means of words, he would study the countenance, watch all its varying expressions, and discover a language in the glances of the eyes. It was not astonishing, then, that he had for some time perceived the increasing passion Emily entertained for him; while he concealed his own, determining to wait for the first opportunity that might arrive to make himself the master of her charms. His heart was inured to form schemes far worse than

this: he did not shrink at sacrificing the peace, the innocence, the respectability of a beautiful being that adored him, so long as he could satisfy his own selfish lusts. Mysterious as was his behaviour, he ever kept up, and indeed essentially added to, the favourable impression he had made upon the whole family during the very first week of their acquaintance; and he had thus formed a better basis whereon to erect those trophies that should declare the misery of the whole, and the ruin of one of that family's members. He cared not, if in cutting off a single branch, the entire tree should sympathetically perish: he thought not that sorrow and remorse might drive an affectionate brother, a loving sister, and a doting mother to the depths of despair.

However, so well did this consummate villain and abandoned hypocrite sustain his part, that he dared to talk of honour and virtue, and other moral excellencies, during the period that intervened between his arrival and the appearance of dinner. At length the meal was announced; and the whole party present sate down to a homely but plentiful fare.

Frequent were the amorous and languishing glances Emily cast, when she fancied herself unperceived, at the object of her affection: and the eye of him she loved was often fixed upon her, though none remarked its observation. Too much master of himself ever to be caught wandering, he never started when, after a minute's silence, a word was addressed to him, and when he was really gazing on the bewitching countenance of his Emily.

Young Crawford ate but little, and seemed absorbed in thought.

"My dear James," at length cried his affectionate parent, "why do you thus seem wrapt up in contemplation? Why are you framing some idle theory, or dissecting some philosophical position, when your friend—your benefactor is with you? Mr. Arnold, join your influence with mine; and make him tell us the mighty topic of his thoughts."

"Cheer up, James," ejaculated Arnold; "or at all events let those who love you be made the companions of your meditation."

"Oh! no—it is nothing," replied Crawford. "I was merely thinking on a subject I had read of this morning."

But this statement was far from the truth: it succeeded, however, in pacifying his mother.

"You are too clever to be sociable, James," cried the lively Catherine, gaily touching her brother's shoulder. "I would not for the world sit down to dinner with half-a-dozen persons so sedate as yourself."

"Why are you not like Mr. Arnold?" demanded Emily, blushing slightly. "He is far more talented than you, has doubtless more upon his mind—"

"Impossible! what can he?" exclaimed Crawford hastily.

"Oh! oh! you are jealous," rejoined Emily, supposing him to allude to the comparative extent of their abilities. "But, as I was saying, be reasonable with all you know; and do not afford us grounds for supposing that too much study will make a man entirely a brute, my dear brother."

"That's right, Emily—do not spare him," said Mrs. Crawford, noticing her son's eye brighten at the above rebukes. "Could your poor father

see you, my boy—had he not deserted us—it is now three years ago—oh! how he would have loved—"

"Talk not of that, mamma!" cried Emily. "The subject will not enliven us, you know: and why renew the melancholy tale?"

"No—no!" exclaimed Arnold hastily; "he was unworthy your love, or he could not have left you as he did. However, we will turn the topic of conversation to something more agreeable."

"It is growing late, sir," said Catherine; for the little clock in the passage had just struck half-past eleven.

"Then, Crawford," cried Arnold, "let us retire to the study for a few minutes: I wish to have a word with you on matters of importance."

Emily rang the bell. The only servant kept in the family, a middle-aged woman, entered the room; and according to the directions given, she carried lights to the library, whither the two friends retired.

When left alone with her daughters, Mrs. Crawford could not help once more noticing the pensive disposition of her son.

"Three years ago, dear girls," said she, "you remember that he was blythe and happy. Then, when your father, whom God prosper, if he be alive—deserted us, under pretence of visiting his cousin, Sir George Mornay, James was naturally and deeply grieved. But his looks began to change, and his manners to alter, not at that exact period. I date that sudden change—for it was sudden—from the commencement of his acquaintance with Mr. Arnold."

"Oh! no! impossible, mamma!" exclaimed Emily, with enthusiasm. "Do you not remember that he rescued James from the robbers the night he returned from making inquiries in London concerning my father? Did he not send my brother home in safety? and the next morning did he not find us in poverty and distress? Was it not his purse that relieved us? was it not his letter to Sir George Mornay that procured the pension we now enjoy? Your letters were always returned unopened: and had it not been for the accidental meeting and consequent acquaintance of Mr. Arnold and James, what should we now be? where should we hide our heads from the cold blast of night?"

"All this is perfectly true, my love," rejoined Mrs. Crawford, affected by the vehemence of her daughter's manner, and mistaking the spring of her eloquence for gratitude, instead of love.

"Rather, then," continued Emily, while her cheek glowed with a vivid crimson, and her eyes, temporarily losing their languor, were lighted up with fire, "rather let us attribute my brother's sensitiveness to incessant embarrassment and doubt, the result of those abstruse studies into which he plunges without being of a proper age for the investigation of Nature's mysteries; and let us always consider Mr. Arnold to be our benefactor—our friend!"

"We will—we ever have," said the affectionate mother, wiping away her tears, and pressing her daughter's hand with parental warmth.

"Perhaps, mamma," cried Catherine, gazing anxiously on Mrs. Crawford's countenance,—"perhaps this retired and too secluded spot does not accord with the natural disposition of James—perhaps a gayer scene would be more congenial to his inclinations?"

"No, dear Kate: you are aware that he has frequently expressed the affection he bears for our comfortable abode; and Mr. Arnold always seconds him in recommending us to remain at the place to which we have become attached: besides, in the letter I received from Sir George Mornay, answering the one our benefactor wrote, that baronet advised us strongly to remain where we are, and not to dream of a removal."

"How I detest the name of the vile man!" exclaimed Emily. "My father's cousin, supposed to be a man of some fortune at least, not to take care of the only—or nearest relatives he has on earth!"

"Yes—it is unkind," rejoined Mrs. Crawford. "But he had a deadly quarrel with your father at an early age, when they were schoolboys together; and on that account would never see him after. Till then they were the greatest friends—"

"And what gave rise to so important a dispute?" asked Catherine: "you have frequently been inclined to tell us; but something has always intervened to prevent you."

"I will tell you, my child, in a few words, because the particulars of the tale are not suited to your innocence and delicate ideas. They both, boy-like, loved the same girl: your father succeeded in carrying off the prize—"

"He married her?"

"No—but let that pass. Sir George Mornay felt his vanity piqued; and accordingly he challenged your father. They fought with pointed foils, although they were but nineteen or twenty years of age; and the baronet was wounded in the arm. As for the young lady, she shortly after died. Your father left college: and in a few months I was united to him."

And Mrs. Crawford hesitated for a minute, while a tear stole down her cheek.

"Let us change the conversation," said Catherine.

"On the contrary, I will finish my history," continued the mother, recovering her scattered ideas, which had been reflected back to scenes she could not ponder upon without emotion. "This marriage enraged Sir George Mornay more than ever against my unfortunate husband, because he had wedded poverty; and lately, as the baronet was not blessed with children, was separated from his wife, and could not marry again, your father was heir to the title in case of his death—"

"And now James is the heir, mamma, is it not so?" enquired Catherine, deeply interested in a conversation some particulars of which she had never heard before.

"Would to God he were!" exclaimed Mrs. Crawford. "That is—if I could find—however—no matter," added she, correcting herself.

Fortunately for her situation, Arnold and his young companion again entered the room; so that she avoided any farther questions concerning the matter.

There was a smile on the lips of both; and a gleam of satisfaction appeared in the countenance of young Crawford—probably the result of the communication Arnold had made to him, and to which he had previously alluded "as a glorious scheme."

After mutual temporary adieus, and after a fond though timid glance from Emily to him she loved, the whole party retired to their respective chambers, one being always ready for Arnold whenever

he paid a visit to the house, which he frequently did since his acquaintance with the family—an acquaintance that commenced shortly after the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Crawford.

CHAPTER II.

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose;
An evil soul, producing holy witness,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek—
A goodly apple, rotten at the heart:—
Oh! what a seemly outside falsehood hath!

SHAKESPEARE.

ARISTOTLE was right when he reckoned love amongst the number of virtues. A young and beautiful girl's earliest passion is the tenderest that can be conceived. It is the attractive power to which her other ideas incline: it is the spring of all her thoughts—thoughts that ever connect themselves with the cherished affection!

Such was the love of Emily for Arnold.

But alas! poor girl—had she known that this love was reciprocally felt, though proceeding from different sources—the one emanating from purity, the other owing its existence to selfish lust,—many a weary sigh, many a burning tear, had been spared her. She seldom caught his eye, but he turned it away, fearful of exciting a mother's suspicions: and that mother seldom left her daughters alone, not from distrust of her benefactor, but from a consciousness of the excellence of such a principle. What was Arnold's joy, then, when at the breakfast table on the following morning, Mrs. Crawford declared her intention of sending Emily on another visit to her aunt at Southampton, where she had passed the preceding summer? This relative, by her side, was the aged widow of an officer in the navy, and lived upon an income originally competent, but which her parsimonious habits had materially increased since the death of her husband.

"But, mamma," exclaimed Emily, with tears in her eyes, for the idea of being separated from Arnold was to her heart like the sting of a scorpion in the most sensitive part of the body—"you cannot send me there alone: who will accompany me?"

"Your brother, my love—will you not, James?" enquired Mrs. Crawford of her son, who was lounging idly by the window.

"That is impossible!" returned the youth; and he hesitated, while he cast a rapid glance at Arnold.

"Why is it impossible?" demanded the mother.

"I had intended this day to have taken your son to London with me," interrupted Arnold: "but as his services will be required—"

At this instant the servant entered the apartment with a letter for Mrs. Crawford, who accordingly sat down to peruse it; and this put an end for the present to the discussion that was going forward.

"Nothing could be more fortunate to suit the wishes of all parties," exclaimed the fond parent, as she laid aside the epistle. "On Saturday next, Emily, your aunt, who is actually now in London, will pass this way. She reminds me of my promise that you should spend this as well as the last summer with her, and declares her intention of calling for you, having a seat in her carriage very much at your disposal. But wherefore that mournful look?"

"Because I was contemplating—that is, I was

thinking how I could leave you, when James will not be here. You and Catherine will feel yourselves so lonely: I shall fancy a thousand dangers—a hundred perils; indeed, I shall——”

And Emily wiped away those tears which fell for a far different cause from the one she named.

“Never fear these visionary evils, dear girl,” returned Mrs. Crawford, totally deceived as to the real reason of her daughter’s distress. “The same dangers—the same perils would await us if you were here: and as your aunt has remembered you in her will, and has my promise that you should comply with her wishes, you must go. Last year you were not so sad!”

“Because James was with you, and I felt you were secure,” interrupted Emily, blushing at her own duplicity.

“He was—but were not we three here alone when he went to London to make enquiries respecting your father at Sir George Mornay’s dwelling, and when the proud baronet refused to see him? and has he not often been away for two or three days together with Mr. Arnold, on shooting or hunting expeditions?”

“And pretty pickings we sometimes had,” remarked Arnold, with a certain smile; “had we not, Crawford?”

“Yes—yes—and devoured the game on the heath instead of bringing it home,” replied the youth, partially blushing; for these were the excuses he had made more than once, when really intent on far different pursuits.

Arnold looked sternly at him for a moment; and James walked away to the window. But his thoughts were doubtless dwelling, in spite of himself, on matters which it pained him acutely to remember. A profound sigh escaped his bosom; while his mother proceeded:—

“Besides—I myself wish that James should accompany Mr. Arnold to London; for I have business of some importance which he may endeavour to investigate, and be himself essentially benefitted by the advice of so able a friend. Withdraw, then, my children—” addressing her daughters—“I must speak relative to this affair at present; and it is not fit for your ears—” she added, while a gloomy shade came over her countenance.

When this command was obeyed, Arnold and Crawford seated themselves at the table, opposite to Mrs. Crawford experiencing the deepest curiosity, and marvelling what could be the important disclosures about to ensue.

Mrs. Crawford hesitated a moment; and then commenced in the following manner:—

“It is needless to recapitulate what you are both already aware of, that I married the cousin and heir-at-law of Sir George Mornay. That baronet failed in attempting to procure a divorce from his wife, by whom he had no children: so they separated by mutual consent. Of course he is unable to enter into another matrimonial connexion. Under these circumstances, my husband, were he alive, would be the successor to the property and title——”

“Of course!” exclaimed Arnold, listening with the greatest attention. “The title may be something; but if what I heard be true, the property——However, proceed, my dear madam,” he added abruptly; “pardon my interruption: I will make a few observations presently.”

Mrs. Crawford continued:—“But only God

knows where my poor husband is. Whether he be dead or alive—whether he be——”

“Do not return to that topic, for heaven’s sake—I implore you,” cried Arnold with vehemence.

“You perpetually torment yourself,” he proceeded in a kinder tone, “by an incessant and useless retrospection over the past, while surmise at the most is all you can form, and the least calculated to console you.”

“Pardon me, my dear sir—I will come to the point. My son, James, would of course be the next heir to Sir George Mornay—if——”

“And am I not?” demanded the youth wildly. “Speak—oh! speak!”

“Why is he not the heir?—consider his suspense—his feelings!” cried Arnold in a quick voice, apparently arising from the interest he felt in his young companion’s welfare, while the poor mother’s tears fell thickly and fast.

“Because—because,” at length responded Mrs. Crawford, collecting her courage, though averting her head—“I have not the certificate of my marriage!”

“Then ’tis all over—that golden dream!” slowly remarked Crawford; and in another instant he wept bitterly.

“Gracious God!” exclaimed Arnold, as that terrible avowal proceeded from the lips of the mother: then relapsing into deep thought, he suffered a minute’s interval of silence to ensue, without breaking upon the pause, although it was fearful to the others present—a parent and her son!

“My boy—my dear boy!” at length cried Mrs. Crawford; “nerve yourself to hear the sorrows of my tale—the reason of my misfortunes!”

“Mother—I am nerved—nerved, aye—sufficiently to hear that I am a beggar, an outcast, a mendicant thrown upon the wide world,” replied Crawford, suddenly raising his head, and grinding his teeth in a determined manner to conceal his emotions. “Proceed—and whatever be the horrors of your history—whatever I may be—mother—I shall be firm—yes, unmoved!”

“’Tis well,” said Arnold, who had watched the past crisis with inconceivable anxiety;—“let me persuade you, my dear madam, to finish this unpleasant scene as speedily as possible. Your son has borne the avowal you had to make, as a man should have done——”

“And he can now bear more!” exclaimed Crawford with wild and fearful vehemence: then seeing that his mother was terrified by his manner, he relented, and threw himself into her arms.

Again Arnold trembled, lest the softness of maternal affection should overcome the firmness of his pupil, and lead him to confess much—Oh! very much—of which she was happily ignorant: but no—James resumed his seat—and both were cool!

“The fact is this,” continued Mrs. Crawford, after a long pause; “I was residing with my mother (who only survived my marriage a twelve-month, being heart-broken by the treatment my husband received at the hands of Sir George Mornay,) when Mr. Crawford made me an offer of his hand. He frankly described his situation with regard to his cousin, his slender means which must perish with him, and the poor chance he had of obtaining an allowance from the vindictive

baronet, whose memory so uselessly cherished the paltry disputes of younger days. My mother objected to the marriage; but we had the banns published unknown to her, as she was old and decrepit, and seldom left the house; and at length we were united by the Rev. Mr. Wescott, of the parish of St. —, London. Such was our haste to leave the metropolis directly—such was our confusion, our joy, our emotion, that we both forgot to take the copy of the certificate, and did not remember it till some days after our marriage; for the time glided away so delightfully in this cottage, and in each other's society, that it was only when a moment intervened for reflection that I recollected our inadvertency. My affectionate husband, however, instantly hurried to London, where he stayed almost a week. On his return, he brought me the appalling news, that, but a few hours after our wedding, Wescott was tempted to extract the last leaf of the register, urged by a bribe which some individual, interested in the deed, had offered. Wescott, moreover, had disappeared, leaving a ruined character behind him in his parish. My grief was heart-rending: I considered myself persecuted by a malignant destiny, and was for a long time unable to listen to reason, or the advice of a tender husband. Our only chance then remaining of accomplishing our ends, was to be united again. But a thousand objections to this step rose in my mind. First I should tacitly acknowledge that hitherto I was merely a mistress, and not a wife; secondly, my mother had joined us—had forgiven me—and had blessed our marriage: to confess the real nature of the matter would be a death-blow to her: and to leave the cottage for even a minute without one of us staying with her, was impossible. Thus wearied by conjecture, torn by various opinions, and agreeing with none, time wore on. The particulars of our case were distressing in the extreme—a damp was thrown upon all our joys—my health, and my husband's spirits were affected. Still one hope—one faint hope remained, that Wescott might be found; and that he might not have torn or lost the paper. But this was as visionary as the most ridiculous of speculations. We advertised frequently; how foolish! Even were he in England, would he reply to our calls upon him? would he not consider them snares to entrap him into the grasp of that law, whose justice he had avoided? Whither he had gone no one knew; a newspaper did indeed hint some few years back that the notorious Wescott was still lurking amongst the purlieus of London, concealed in those sinks of iniquity the metropolis so amply affords. But to return. Time wore on, I say—and you, James, were born rather prematurely, occasioned by the anguish I endured; or else we should certainly have adopted some summary measures to remedy the inadvertency we had committed. Shortly after you first saw the light of day, my poor mother died, in consequence of a severe letter that my husband received from Sir George Mornay, reproaching him for being *taken in by a green girl and her old hag of a parent*. Such were the elegant terms in which he wrote; and had not necessity driven me, I never would have solicited so heartless an individual for succour. However, I will conclude as soon as possible. When I was enabled to travel, we went into a distant county, and were legally married once more.

I have now related to you, James, as my son, and to you, Mr. Arnold, as a friend and benefactor, a circumstance which hitherto I have kept securely locked up in my own breast, intending only to have confided it to you, dear boy, when your mature age would allow it; and had anything occurred to me, I have committed it to paper. All that remains to be done, is to seek out, if possible, this Mr. Wescott: of his personal appearance I cannot give the slightest idea, so faintly is it impressed upon my mind. Now, then, my tale is told: the secret, that has for years preyed upon my mind, is unburthened: the inadvertency I committed is exposed to him who suffers by it. Probably, in your almost hopeless inquiries concerning Wescott, Mr. Arnold will assist you, James, with his counsel and advice to the utmost."

"Be assured, my dear Madam," interrupted Arnold, hastily, "that all I can possibly do towards furthering your desire in this matter, shall be done. Never fear, whether the certificate be forthcoming or not —"

And he rose, stopped short, and then walked towards the window, as if to conceal the emotion which the sad disclosure had excited.

"Bless the individual," exclaimed Mrs. Crawford, "who can drop a tear in sympathy with the fatherless and the widow!"

And she hastily left the room.

What were now the feelings of James Crawford? He had lately, since his father's disappearance, considered himself the rightful heir to an honourable title: his vanity had been gratified—his emulation had been aroused to study, so that he might do honour to the rank he had seemed destined to attain. And now, those dreams—those felicitous dreams that had soothed the last few years of his life, and had stolen upon the melancholy, which had recently oppressed him, as the fleeting sunbeams glide through the grated and narrow window to the interior of the gloomy dungeon-cell—those dreams had flown—departed—perhaps for ever!

He sat for a few minutes like one in a lethargy—he had listened eagerly to the recital of his mother—he had followed every word with breathless attention—and had nerved himself from the beginning to hear that a thousand other misfortunes, multiplied a thousand times, awaited him. During one period of the distressing narrative, when he found that the clergyman would never respond to advertisement nor to promise of reward and secrecy—when he was informed that this same individual had either quitted the kingdom, or else remained concealed in a deep disguise, he had felt himself like a man suddenly condemned to death, while but an hour previously all the joys of existence were apparently at his feet.

When Crawford noticed that his mother had departed from the room, he started abruptly from his seat, rushed towards the window, caught hold of Arnold's hand, gazed at him steadfastly in the face, and seemed to search for relief in his eyes—in his countenance.

"My dear boy," said Arnold, with a smile, "when I affected grief before your mother ere now, it was only because decency required it. She has gone away, poor woman, under the impression that I feel greatly for you; and it would have been cruel, had I not played the hypocrite. However, let not this scene—this disclosure annoy your peace. The scheme which I and Riving-



stone concocted, and which I partially explained to you last night, is worth all the titles in the world: for, to tell you a small secret, as I know the affairs of most people in London as well as I know mine own, Sir George Mornay has about as much certain income as I have—exactly as much, I should fancy: and a title, without wealth adequate to the support of it, is nonsense. It is always but a poor thing in reality—nothing more than a gilded toy: and our pursuits would for ever prevent the possibility of your assuming the baronetcy,” continued the specious and experienced adviser, “even if it were within your grasp. So, James, attend to me: you have hithe to followed my counsel—show yourself a man—prove that you are above the petty disappointments of the world—and think no more of Sir George Mornay. Who knows but that the

title may still come to you? Who knows but that we may find the necessary paper? Cheer up, James—and let us prepare for our journey to London.”

A gleam of hope appeared upon the countenance of the youth, as Arnold thus addressed him. That individual had so completely gained the greatest influence over his pupil, that he was invariably listened to with attention, and followed with obedience.

Suddenly Crawford loosened the hand of his friend, sate down, and was preparing to write a letter to his mother, fearful of seeing her on account of her agitation, when the servant entered, bearing one for him. The contents evinced the kindness of the most affectionate of parents. Slightly alluding to the discourse of the morning, she begged him to hasten with Mr. Arnold to Lon-

don, without delay, declaring it would be better to take no farewell of herself, but of course to bid adieu to his sisters. The epistle concluded with many invocations of blessings upon his head, and many prayers for his safety in the metropolis.

Crawford's heart had been hardened by a variety of circumstances; and even had it been as weak as that of a woman, the remembrance of Arnold's injunctions, as well as his presence, would have restrained any ebullitions of feeling during a perusal of such a letter. He therefore rang the bell, and desired his sisters to be summoned immediately.

"It is then determined that I am to go to that vile Southampton!" exclaimed Emily, with a languid air, and a drop glistened on her eyelash as she glanced towards him she loved, while her brother was conversing with Catherine at the other end of the room.

Arnold looked round—they were not noticed: he seized the opportunity, and hastily stepping up to Emily, took her hand, pressed it tenderly, and dropped it again, as he whispered in her ear, "Thou lovest me, dear girl—and thou art loved in return. Be happy—within a week I will see thee at Southampton. Hush! be thyself, as thou valuest our peace!"

Almost stupefied with astonishment, and overcome with excess of joy, Emily was nearly falling at the feet of Arnold: but he saw the danger of their situation, marked the state of her feelings, and said in a low yet firm voice, "Remember!"

She instantly recovered her presence of mind, while the happiness which such an avowal, as the one she had just heard, imparted to her soul, added fresh charms, if possible, to her natural beauties.

"Come, Crawford," cried Arnold in his usual cool and collected tone—"it is time we should depart. "It is past mid-day already:—hasten and let's to the stable. Adieu, young ladies—farewell, Emily—Kate, remember your friend."

And with a momentary glance of fondness—but a world of expression was in it—at Emily, he wrung both their hands; and followed by his young pupil—his student in iniquity—the boy whom a confiding mother yielded with pleasure to his care—he hurried out of the room, leaving behind him one heart that was beating for him, and was rendered happy by his confession of reciprocal love—a confession that was but the prelude to as vile a scheme of seduction as ever was contemplated by unprincipled Man!

CHAPTER III.

Are the days then gone, when on Hounslow heath
We flashed our page?

PAUL CLIFFORD.

HAVING prepared their horses, Crawford strapped behind him to the saddle a small leather case in which were contained changes of linen and other necessary articles for a sojourn of a few days; although in reality, according to his arrangements with Arnold, he intended to remain some time away from home: yet, such was the anxious solicitude of his mother, that had he sent forward by the coach a large trunk filled with clothes, &c. she would have justly expected his absence would be long. A few minutes, however, found them safely on their route towards London, trotting along at a decent pace, for the

day was uncommonly cool, considering the season of the year.

Every traveller upon this road must be aware that it is not very attractive: and as it was far from novel to either of our horsemen, they spared no time to gaze upon the few—very few natural beauties there flourishing. Neither was their conversation at all important. We shall therefore suppose them arrived at Hounslow, where they stopped opposite a small house, and knocked at the door. It was opened by an ill-looking man, about fifty-five years of age, who was instantly saluted by the name of Rivingstone on the part of Crawford and his companion. He desired them to dismount and take some refreshment, in a gentlemanly and quiet way, because two or three officers of the cavalry regiment stationed at Hounslow were passing at the moment: but when Arnold and his young pupil had fastened their horses to the palings before the house, and were comfortably seated at the oaken table in the neat little parlour they were conducted to, his manners were familiar, and betokened a long or intimate acquaintance with his visitors.

Rivingstone, as we stated above, was a man between fifty and sixty, but hale and strong, and with a determined expression of countenance. He had received an University education, according to his own account; yet he always forbore speaking of his early career, and gave unsatisfactory answers, when his colleagues took the trouble to ask, "why he had embraced the profession he was in?"—and what that profession was will doubtless soon appear.

Having placed some glasses on the table, Rivingstone proceeded to draw the corks of a couple of bottles that he took from a cupboard in one corner of the room; and then plated sandwiches, &c. on the board, as it seems he had expected the arrival of his guests: indeed Arnold had himself arranged this meeting on the preceding day.

"Wine maketh glad the heart of man, as an ancient monarch said or sung," remarked Rivingstone, while he poured out a glass, and nodded familiarly to the others, who followed his example.

"And this is none of the worst in the world, my friend," rejoined Arnold, sipping a few drops and holding his glass towards the light: "'tis exquisitely clear, though somewhat full-bodied."

"It does not affect my head however—neither cerebrum, nor cerebellum," returned Rivingstone. "Well, you see I have not forgotten my Latin—"

"No, indeed," cried Arnold; "and you take care occasionally to put us in mind of it. Ever since I first knew you—"

"And that is a good three years. But the moment I met you in London, I was well aware you were a game fellow; it was marked on your countenance."

"And you have been so long in the profession," added Crawford, addressing himself to Rivingstone, "that your experience in physiognomy, to discover a good from a bad character, is seldom mistaken—a wonderful talent indeed, as useful as free masonry; so that you will never stop a thief on the high road, to rob him, because his trade is told by his looks."

"Indeed, you are right—and that was the reason I did not pick your pocket, Master Jatties, the first time Arnold introduced you to me, when

we met to deliberate about that night's work, you know——"

"Well, well, a truce to this," exclaimed Crawford, whose soul was not so old in crime, that it could make a mockery of one of the deadliest enormities; which is like murdering a man, and then dressing up his gory corpse with fantastic colours to excite ridicule over a scene of horror.

"You will accompany us this day to London?" enquired Arnold hastily, in order to change the conversation.

"Yes, if it be convenient—that is, if you have already hired the apartment, where we may safely concoct or digest our schemes."

"I have," replied Arnold: "so the sooner we start the better. For the greater convenience of privacy, I have selected rooms in the City—in Leadenhall-street, I forget the number——"

But Arnold had another reason for thus selecting a situation so far from the West End.

"'Tis as you please," returned Rivingstone, rising. "I shall now saddle my horse, and join you outside: we will depart as speedily as suits you."

"But why not wait till evening, while I think of it?" demanded Arnold, a sudden idea striking him, and which he now expressed. "In our ride during the dark hours we may perhaps light upon somewhat worth picking—aye?"

"I will send the boy, then, to take care of your horses," rejoined Rivingstone; "for, indeed, I see no particular hurry as to an hour or two."

Rivingstone now left his companions for a few moments, and went into a back kitchen, where he ordered an ill-looking urchin, who was sitting there, to put the two horses into the stable, and to tell "the old woman" (alluding to his cook) that she must have dinner ready by five precisely. Having attended to these matters, he rejoined his guests. Cards and dice were then produced; and these, with conversation, schemes, plots, and anecdotes, filled up the time till dinner made its appearance. We shall, however, pass over this with as little ceremony as possible, and suppose the clock to have struck nine, at which hour the party proposed to start for the metropolis.

The night was far from as clear as the preceding one; and the air gradually became excessively chilly. We noticed that the day had been cool, considering the season of the year; and when the dews began to fall, that coolness increased. But the steeds snuffed the freshness with pleasure, when they were brought round to the door.

"I cannot say when I shall be home again, Thomas," cried Rivingstone to the boy above mentioned: "probably in a fortnight, or three weeks. However, be always ready—for I might return suddenly."

The three horsemen then started off at a sharp trot. When arrived at about three miles from Hounslow, a misty moon for an instant shot forth its feeble rays, which fell upon the pale cheek of young Crawford. His breath came thickly—his heart beat rapidly—and his respiration was painfully audible, as those straggling beams momentarily illuminated the spot, and glanced on the mile-stone at the side of the road. Arnold had probably expected that Crawford's feelings would be aroused; and he pushed along at a more rapid

rate, cursing himself for not having concluded the journey by daylight—for darkness is unfavourable to the guilty conscience. Rivingstone coolly remarked "that was the place," and seemed to think as little of the deed it recalled to his memory, as the infant of breaking a toy.

"Yes—that is indeed the spot," exclaimed Crawford, in a hollow voice. "Till then I was happy—and now——But let me not retrospect—thought is alarming!"

"Your emotions are superstitiously childish," returned Arnold. "Is that fear—that trembling, the part of one who is about to act in a wide theatre, where the eyes of all the nation will be bent upon him—where the slightest word—the gentlest sigh will betray him? Oh! no—if such be your heart," continued this wily tutor of a promising pupil, "if such be your nature, for God's sake, retract—retract, ere you involve yourself and your friends in ruin!"

"I am firm—indeed I am!" cried Crawford whose vanity was piqued by these words.

They had already reined in again, when Arnold commenced his reproaches; and this pause gave the youth an opportunity of wiping from his cheek the big drops which rolled down them—drops—heated drops of agony, despite the evening chill: for whatever were the powerful cause that could produce such inward horror, that agony was indeed terrible!

Justly had he declared, "Although my years be those of a boy, my soul is that of a man!"—for the thoughts which filled his memory—the dreadful recollections of some scene of terror, awakened to new life by the presence of the mile-stone—were harrowing in the extreme!

No sooner had he once more recovered his presence of mind when the sounds of a horse's step struck upon the ear of our little party.

"The traveller is alone—he comes from the direction of London," remarked Arnold hastily, after commanding a dead halt.

"Shall we chance it?" enquired Rivingstone, coolly.

"What say you—are you willing?" asked Arnold.

"Doubtless—my funds are low—and our London scheme requires money. But how slow he rides!"

"And you, Crawford," continued Arnold quickly. "Shall you prove yourself a man?"

"Why, Mr. Arnold, should we risk our lives, when this very morning——"

"Rivingstone," cried Arnold, sternly interrupting Crawford,—"ride on with this boy: I will follow in a moment."

"May I be d—d if I leave you, however," returned Rivingstone bluntly. "The traveller draws near—nearer: what is to be done?"

"Obey me, I insist upon it—proceed with Crawford!" was the answer given by Arnold.

The authoritative tone in which he spoke, his decided manner, the apparent reluctance of James to meddle in the matter, and the approach of the traveller (for the above conversation occupied only the space of a few moments) determined Rivingstone how to act. He called to his youthful companion, who followed him mechanically; and they struck into a hand-gallop together, passing the stranger at a short distance farther on.

Meantime, Arnold, whose courage was unquestionable, drew up in the middle of the road, and

calmly waited the arrival of the traveller, who was now walking his horse. The night was almost pitch dark; for though at intervals a ray of the misty moon gleamed through the dusky curtains that were drawn around her, still those beams were fitful and evanescent. On each side of the road was a low edge—beyond them were fields and portions of the heath; so that easy avenues of escape in case of necessity were at hand. But such an idea never entered the mind of Arnold.

We may suppose that Crawford was not a little anxious—Rivingstone was as indifferent as the animal he rode; but his young companion's heart beat violently when they turned round to listen, shortly after they passed the traveller. Nothing struck upon their ears, save the pace of the horse, for nearly a minute—a long period for suspense: and then, "Stand, sir!" in a low but firm voice, interrupted the silence of the night.

"Villain!" cried the stranger: and the report of a pistol succeeded.

"Has Arnold any weapons?" demanded Rivingstone, hastily.

"No—I think not," was the reply.

"Then we must return, Crawford":—and in another instant they were at the spot, where Arnold had fallen from his horse, and the stranger had dismounted to capture him: but Rivingstone leapt from his horse, caught hold of the traveller's collar, and hurled him to the ground. Arnold then, to the surprise of his companions, rose slowly; and after rifling the stranger's pockets, exclaimed, "Off—off for our lives!—it's all right!"

"He is not dead—good God!" cried Crawford, in a tone expressive of deep anxiety.

"Oh, no—he will recover in a minute," returned Rivingstone: "he is *only* stunned."

"Then let us depart," again cried Arnold. "I was stunned too by a blow from his whip: but the pistol was useless—he could scarcely aim in the dark."

The traveller remained, stupified by his fall, in the middle of the road, while his plunderers once more mounted their horses, and galloped away.

At a late hour they arrived at Kensington, where they were to leave their horses, according to the suggestion of Arnold, that no suspicion might be excited by seeing three individuals ride so unseasonably into the metropolis.

Opposite a large house, as well as its dimensions could be discerned in the darkness of the night, Arnold halted for a moment, and pulled a bell, the wire of which hung by the side of the gate; for there were iron railings and a small shrubbery before the spacious building. He then bade his companions follow him, while he led the way round by a side-way to the back of the mansion, where a large door was already opened, at which stood a man prompt to receive him.

"Take these horses, John—and say not a word: I shall probably be here to-morrow."

The servant made no reply, but did as he was ordered; and Arnold, having wished him a good night in a careless manner, took his comrades' arms and again conducted them to the main road, which they pursued for London.

"Who the devil lives there?" enquired Rivingstone.

"A friend of mine," returned Arnold. "He kindly offered me the use of his stables, whenever I required them; and as he generally stays abroad late, his servants are obliged to take turns to sit up for him."

"And will not the people, of whom you have hired the apartments in Leadenhall-street, think it strange that we arrive so unseasonably?" asked Crawford, as he slung from his arm to his back the small bundle he had brought.

"Not at all: the rooms have a private entrance—and there is not a soul, save the servant, to notice our coming. Trust to me for the necessary arrangements."

"Let us step boldly forward," said Rivingstone, "and examine the contents of that purse we had presented to us ere now."

"'Tis a pocket-book," remarked Arnold.

"Ah! that looks better still: we must take care to have the notes, if there are any, changed early to-morrow morning, before they are stopped."

"And to-morrow," cried Crawford, after a moment's pause, "I shall commence my enquiries after Mr. Wescott!"

"Wescott—Wescott!" exclaimed Rivingstone; "I knew him well! He was a parson, was he not?"

"He was—and a rascal too."

"I could have given you that information. When I first commenced my career in the *profession*," proceeded Rivingstone, "I became acquainted with him: he had taken to the road as well—and many's the crown piece I've put into his pocket. But he played me so many tricks, that I separated from him; and before many months passed, he was hanged at Tyburn for highway robbery."

"Hanged!" ejaculated Crawford. "Gracious heavens! then all my hopes are vain—gone for ever!"

And Arnold felt the youth's arm tremble violently, as it supported his own.

"My dear boy, remember my injunctions," said his patron. "Think of the renown you will shortly possess—of the lasting fame our plots will procure for you—think of the riches we shall accumulate—of the wealth we shall acquire!"

"I do—I do—" rejoined Crawford: "but my mother!"

"We must manage that affair by some means or another. Come, let us change the conversation. But, hark! what do I hear? we are pursued, by God!"

"Haste—haste to the side of the road—fall upon your faces, or we are lost!" exclaimed Rivingstone in a hurried voice.

But before the terrified Crawford could obey these injunctions, six cavalry soldiers galloped up, and made the little party their prisoners, ere the slightest resistance could be possibly offered.

"Take care how you insult us," cried Arnold, with the greatest presence of mind. "Whether this outrage is intended as a joke or not, I am ignorant: but beware how you carry it too far, my fine fellows."

"We know you," replied the serjeant, who commanded the soldiers; "you're the three willains, that robbed our captain—Captain Stewart too—you willains. If it wasn't so dark, I'd seek gallows picktered on your faces. But its lucky we happened to pass this way on duty,"

"Truce to this nonsense!" interrupted Arnold, "Is there an officer here?"

"Yes—I'm the officer," replied the serjeant.

"Then come with me to the nearest house, and I will satisfy you that you are mistaken: meantime let your men detain my comrades till I return."

"There's reason in that, at all events, howsoever," said the serjeant. "Well, let Jenkins come with me, and we'll go to that house, where I see a light."

Accordingly, Arnold marched off with the officer and a file of men. During his absence, which lasted about ten minutes, the anxiety of Crawford and the alarm of Rivingstone were not inconsiderable. The former saw nothing but a dreary prospect—ruin, disgrace, and death: the other mourned the sudden check that was now likely to be put to the progress of their glorious schemes. At length steps were heard; and the voice of the serjeant broke the gloomy stillness that had prevailed.

"Come, comrades, loose them gentlemen: we've got on a wrong scent—and the devil's in it if we don't get into trouble——"

"Say no more about it, my friend," returned Arnold, coolly. "I promise you never to open my lips concerning the matter."

"Thank'ee, sir," cried the serjeant. Then, turning to his men, he exclaimed, "Mount!"—for they had previously jumped from their horses.

"Good night, sir—good night, gentlemen—no offence, and thank ye kindly. Squad, attention—gallop!" and the little party rode off at a rapid rate towards London.

"How the devil did you manage?" enquired Rivingstone, while poor Crawford was almost mad with joy at this unexpected release.

"Excellently well," returned Arnold, with his usual equanimity of manner. "I happened to have about me the card of some distinguished person, who called upon me lately at my hotel; and having produced it, I told the serjeant that we had been to dine with a friend, and were determined to have some fun with the Charleys in our way home—so that I had sent back my carriage, and we had set out to walk. The poor fellow was almost mad with vexation at his mistake, nearly fell upon his knees, and hoped I should not report him to his officers. I entirely forgave him, and that's the whole story of it."

"Oh! if I were blessed with such presence of mind!" cried Crawford, as they all three once more proceeded on their walk towards the metropolis.

"It is useful on occasions," remarked Arnold, carelessly. "But who would have thought of our meeting such adventures in one night? 'tis an excellent joke!"

"Yes—now we are out of it!" said Rivingstone, drily.

"Were you afraid, then?"

"I did not exactly feel comfortable."

"Nor I either—very far from it," added Crawford.

"Well, well—a morsel of supper, and a glass of wine, when we reach your apartments, will do wonders for us," said Arnold.

"What! do you not intend to live in the same house with us?" demanded James, in a tone of disappointment as well as surprise.

"No—I shall sleep elsewhere: business is con-

tinually pressing me in numberless quarters. I shall, however, be frequently with you; and when the scheme is to be put in execution, after the necessary preliminaries and arrangements, you will find that I shall not be idle, my boy."

"Where shall you dwell, then?" asked Crawford.

"At some hotel, or coffee-house," returned Arnold, who had private reasons for not living with his companions. "But let us put our best foot foremost—we are near the hackney-coach stand at Knights bridge. It must be twelve o'clock already."

They accordingly walked on swiftly, and stepped into a vehicle at the stand mentioned by Arnold. It was midnight when they were passing Hyde-park Corner; but the busy hum of the metropolis was not yet hushed. Carriages were driving about in all directions—the watchmen were on their posts—and many a young blade was roving the streets, meditating plans hostile to the safety of the nocturnal guardians of London. The music, that occasionally flowed from some gay mansion, as our travellers were whirled up Piccadilly, proclaimed the presence of revelry and festivity. Many a heart in those splendid dwellings beat with rapture; while others sighed with jealousy, envy, and aversion for some successful rival. Many a lip uttered words which the emotions of the bosom could not corroborate; many a deceiver was himself deceived. Nor few perhaps were the smiles which belied the real state of the feelings, and but barely covered sorrow, hopeless love, or a thousand conflicting passions. Still all the noise, the revelry, the mirth, the movement of the metropolis were passed idly by, on the part of Arnold and Rivingstone; though Crawford watched with interest the various objects that attracted his attention—for London was not so familiar to him as to his companions.

Orders had been given to drive to Leadenhall-street; and it was not long ere the vehicle stopped opposite a certain house, when Arnold pulled the check-string.

Having dismissed the coach, he took a key from his pocket, opened the door, and conducted his friends up stairs into a handsome suite of apartments, where candles were already lighted by the servant, who had doubtless heard the arrival of her masters. She had been hired by Arnold to have everything comfortably prepared for Rivingstone and Crawford: and as he paid liberally in advance, no enquiries were made concerning the gentlemen for whom he had taken the lodgings.

Supper was soon served up, and washed down with excellent wine: then, when the domestic was dismissed, Arnold produced the pocket-book which had almost cost them dearer than they anticipated. It was of plain workmanship, with a silver clasp; on one side was a small plate, whereon was engraved the name of its rightful proprietor, WILLIAM STEWART. Little regard was, however, paid to its exterior: the contents were more interesting to the present owners. When it was opened, Bank notes to the amount of four hundred pounds were discovered; and several papers, letters, &c., of no consequence to anybody. These, notwithstanding, Arnold declared should be sent by coach the next morning to Captain Stewart, of the—hussars, stationed at Hounslow. The booty, which was much greater than the worthy trio had ex-

pected, was readily welcomed by the plunderers; and Arnold promised to sally out the first thing on the following day for the purpose of changing the notes at different places, before they should be stopped; but on second thoughts he transferred this duty to Rivingstone.

A great load was removed from Crawford's mind, when by the remarks of the soldiers he had discovered that murder had not been committed; and he could not forbear noticing how singular it was that *two* daring deeds had been perpetrated by them almost in the self-same spot!

At a late hour Arnold withdrew, promising to be with his companions early on the morrow; and they themselves shortly after retired to their respective chambers, where everything was in excellent order for their accommodation and comfort. Crawford, however, slept but little—his dreams were troubled; and to his memory frequently came, during his untroubled slumbers, the picture of that part of the road where the milestone was situated, and other harrowing circumstances connected with the place. Then he thought of a mother, who believed him to be virtuous, and whom he was so grossly deceiving; he thought of the errors he had been beguiled into—of the associates he had chosen;—and he trembled in his transitory sleep, where oblivion was denied him. An ignominious end was not absent from his mind; and he awoke terrified, attempted to extenuate his crimes to himself, and vowed to repent without delay. But when the light of day beamed in at the windows of his apartment, his courage returned, and his good resolutions vanished with the darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And men below, and saints above;
For love is heaven, and heaven is love!

WALTER SCOTT.

What equal tormente toe the griefs of minde,
And pyning anguish hid yn gentle heartes,
That only feedes itself with thoughts unkinde,
And nourisheth her own consuming smarte.

SPENSER.

On the same morning that Mr. Arnold and James Crawford departed from the cottage, the affectionate mother, ever interested for the welfare of her children, wrote the following letter to Sir George Mornay, although she did violence to her proper pride in soliciting favours from one who probably cared little or nothing about her. Still the good of her family prevailed over every other consideration:—

"Sir,

"Notwithstanding your firm resolves never to see nor speak to any member of my family, I have ventured to write under the following circumstances, confident that your heart is not entirely estranged from us, if I may be allowed to judge from the punctual payment of the income which you granted at Mr. Arnold's intercession, since my husband's mysterious disappearance.

"My eldest daughter, Emily, passed three months last year with an aunt at Southampton, and made so favourable an impression upon this relative, that she is already remembered in her will. This summer, therefore, according to promise, I am determined she shall again pay Mrs. Otway a visit; and on the following Saturday her aunt will call for her in her carriage. Now, you must be aware that there are various contingent expences attached to this; and as my income is only sufficient for the absolute maintenance of my family, if you would assist me with your bounty, you would confer an additional favour on me and my dear children. I shall not renew the supplications and arguments made

use of in my last letter to allow me to present my family to you; at the same time I cannot help thinking your conduct might be less severe.

"Waiting your reply, and again apologising for my intrusion,

"I have the honour to remain,

"Your obedient servant,

"AMELIA CRAWFORD."

By return of post a letter was brought by the boy, who was employed to act as carrier to the various dwellings within a few miles of Bagshot, containing an enclosure of fifty pounds, and the following reply:—

"MADAM,

"I hasten to conform to your wishes, as you will find by the small sum I have been enabled to spare for the intended expedition you mention. My circumstances are far more embarrassed than the world would suppose possible; or I should have assisted your necessities more amply. Be assured that any thing in moderation I can ever perform for you shall not be neglected; and you need not feel bashful in addressing me upon such subjects. I admire your delicacy in not persisting to request an interview, which for particular reasons of my own I am resolved never—need to grant.

"GEORGE MORNAV.

"Portland-place."

The contents of this letter not a little astonished the happy Mrs. Crawford, and her two daughters; for never had their haughty relative written in so condescending and mild manner before. Former epistles were invariably more laconic, and more to the absolute point, without making tenders of service, or even hinting that future appeals would be noticed, whatever might be their subject. The following Saturday was therefore hailed with less gloom than it otherwise would have been; and when, true to her promise, the aunt stopped at the gate, and descended from her carriage, Mrs. Crawford's heart was less heavy at the prospect of parting from her child than she had fondly anticipated. The meeting with the aged relative, was rather affecting; for she felt attached to Emily on account of the kindness with which that lovely girl treated her during her stay at Southampton the preceding year: and she moreover pitied the condition of the mother, either deserted by a worthless husband, or having lost him by some calamity of which she was ignorant—although the old lady's parsimonious habits prevented her from ever drawing the strings of her purse for the use of Mrs. Crawford.

Mrs. Otway was upwards of sixty—a venerable-looking lady, but excessively penurious, and illiberal to the highest degree, where she did not actually take a liking to an individual; for Charity to the poor was in her eyes merely the encouragement of vice and laziness.

Such, however, was the person to whose dwelling Emily was about to be consigned: nor few were the tears that were shed, and the tender farewells that took place, when she parted from her mother and sister, and stepped into the carriage, which rolled away at a rapid rate. The day was fine, the roads not remarkably dusty, and the vehicle was a light one; so that they were enabled to reach Southampton before the wing of night was spread abroad.

Amongst the few individuals, who called the next morning at Mrs. Otway's house to welcome her return, and to renew their acquaintance with "the beautiful Miss Crawford," was a young man of some four or five-and-twenty, named Hunter. He was by profession a surgeon, and had succeeded in acquiring even more than a competency, in addition to the small fortune his father left him

at his decease: but for the last ten or eleven months his manners had perfectly changed—his habits became different—the rose on his cheek faded—a deadly palor had supplanted its place—and in fact his soul appeared to be absorbed in deep—intense woe.

This melancholy was however materially different from that of young Crawford: it arose not from crime—it could not—never was a more virtuous, a more amiable young man than Henry Hunter. Nor was that melancholy intermittent now capable of being expelled by excitement, nor occasionally forgotten in the society of companions, or by aid of the bottle. It was constantly present to tear the heart of him whose peace of mind was gone for ever! Yet his appearance was such as could not fail to attract attention. His figure was genteel, his manners soft and polite, and his features far from displeasing. We may therefore suppose how great was Miss Crawford's astonishment, when he presented himself at the house of her aunt: and she could not help exclaiming, as there were no other visitors there at the instant, "Good heavens! Mr. Hunter, you have been very ill!"

"No, Miss Crawford," replied the young man, smiling bitterly. "Mental affliction alone has worked in me this change which has doubtless struck you."

"Indeed, then, the ravages of sorrow must be far more severe than those of the most dangerous malady—the most deplorable bodily injury."

"Yes: you are right. When the body is tormented with the stings of a grievous sickness, man can generally calculate the probable termination of his pain and suffering: but when the mind has been mortally wounded by the stroke of affliction—when the heart—" and he struck his hand against his breast with fearful violence, as he elevated his voice at the same time—"is oppressed by secret and incurable woe—by an internal sorrow that no drug can remove, no earthly anodyne alleviate,—never, never can we fix the era of that mind's convalescence at an earlier period than the date of death—the presence of the destroyer!"

"This is indeed the language of despair!" exclaimed Mrs. Otway, wiping a tear from her eye; "and you—young man—what deeply-rooted woes can you have graven on your heart at so early an age?"

"I will not, ladies, betray my ridiculous griefs to ye," returned Hunter, while one of those bitter smiles, which expressed the state of his feelings far better than a thousand words, agitated his lips. "No—I will not expose my follies—my weaknesses to your ears; and yet," he continued slowly, "since man would laugh at my avowal of them—would treat my tale with scorn or jesting—who but woman can sympathize with me—can patiently be made the confidant of my sorrows?"

"If you will allow me to speak," exclaimed Emily, "I think I have divined the nature of them? A sudden idea has struck me."

"Then art thou an enchantress," was Hunter's reply, while a blush mantled on his cheek, and left it paler by the contrast than before.

"No—the very words you made use of, relative to a confession of your misery to men and to women, have betrayed you. It is not caused by wrecked ambition, defeated schemes of worldly gain, avaricious prospects blasted: jealousy, envy,

or malice have no part in its origin. But it is a hopeless—may I say what?" and delicacy sealed Emily's lips.

"Yes, Miss Crawford, you have really penetrated into the fountain of—But no matter—'tis a hopeless love: and now go, laugh at me!"

"Far—far from that," exclaimed Emily, her thoughts dwelling on her passion for Arnold; "because I can pity you!"

"Aye—I must be pitied!" returned the young man with violence. "God has allowed me in his mercy," continued he satirically, "to know—to calculate—to mark almost to an instant the hour of my death: and though that death will give relief to all my sorrows—though in the grave there be naught but the cold worm to prey upon me, still I dread its approach, because I cannot combat the rapid advances it is making. Night witnesses my feverish head press a sleepless pillow: the morning finds me less refreshed than when I sought my couch. The moon rolls silently on, and her silver rays fall upon my burning brow—my heavily beating heart: then the sun walks in glory from the eastern horizon, and as his beams enliven our hemisphere, they only serve to boil my blood, and set my brain on fire. The soft breezes of Spring may bear my sighs upon their breath, disregarded, uncared for: the roaring blasts of inclement Winter drown them with their din. The gay scenes of festivity and mirth seem mockeries of my agony; and solitude renders it the more acute by contemplation. Where—where, then, am I happy?"

"But your love may not be so hopeless as you deem it—so fruitlessly bestowed as you imagine it," remarked Emily, affected by the energy with which Hunter had uttered the foregoing words.

"Indeed it is! From certain expressions—from certain peculiarities of manner that I noticed, at the commencement of my passion, on the part of her I adore, I found her heart to be another's—for ever, yes—for ever estranged from me! I discovered that it could not beat in unison with mine: that it could only *pity*, never *love* me. And then how selfish, how jealous is love! I hate the man she will render happy—and yet I have never seen him—or, having seen him, know him not. I detest the individual, who is the object of her affection—while I am ignorant of his name, and probably of his person. But I find that this hand could almost grasp a dagger to pierce the breast on which the head of her may one day repose—Oh! yes—I feel shame to myself, that this hand could do it!"

"You affect me, young man," cried the old lady, once more wiping her eyes, while Emily's tears fell plentifully. "How tender must be thy heart!"

"Tender! I would that it were flint—that it were rock; or that I had never loved. Tender! 'tis ruined—seared incurably—withered—broken"—and his voice was choked with terrible emotion, as he buried his face in his hands.

Neither Emily nor her aunt interrupted the pause that ensued; they pitied a fellow creature's sorrows, and considered them too sacred to intrude upon by even the syllables of commiseration.

"However," cried Hunter, at length recovering partial tranquility, and raising his head abruptly, "it has pleased God to afflict me; and yet what have I done to offend the Majesty of Heaven?"

What sin can be laid to my charge? Many a wicked man, proud in the career of enormity, walks scathelessly and even prosperously on the face of the earth, while I—I, that have never acted contrary to the divine laws—I am persecuted—I, the innocent, the guiltless, am crushed—bruised—overpowered—ruined! What exists in the world to prevent me from committing suicide? What can hinder me from curtailing an existence I am wearied of—an existence composed of maddening nights, and a series of miserable days? What is it to me if the sun shine brightly? its beams only increase the heat of my boiling blood, which circulates like fiery lead through my throbbing veins! What is it to me that the flowers flourish—the trees vegetate—or that Nature is blooming and fair? how can I enjoy the world's beauties? They are thriving and gay: I am a sapling stricken by the vengeful storm—destroyed—whithered—dead!"

And with these words, the melancholy victim of blighted love and hopeless passion seized his hat, made but a few steps towards the door, and rushed from the house.

This scene left an unpleasant impression on the minds of Emily and her aunt for the rest of the day. So changed from what he formerly was—so decayed in health—so sunken from liveliness to disease and despair—so lost to the whisperings of hope, or the breath of consolation, was the unfortunate being that had just left them! The evening, therefore, was cheerless, and dull for both; till suddenly a loud knock at the front door interrupted the silence that reigned in the drawing-room, and awakened the aunt from a certain browniness, which, not amounting to an absolute slumber, had come upon her.

Presently the door opened—and Arnold entered the room.

"Ah! Mr. Arnold," cried Emily, with delight beaming in her eyes, forgetting at the same moment poor Hunter and his sorrows; "what accident brought you hither?"

"Yourself, dear one," replied he in a low voice—and then thus aloud, "merely a matter of urgent business, Miss Crawford—nothing more."

"Allow me to present you to my aunt?" and the formal introduction accordingly took place.

"I must apologize for disturbing Mrs. Otway so unseasonably," exclaimed Arnold; "but the friendship I bear the family of Mrs. Crawford induced me to—"

No apology is necessary, sir, I assure you returned the old lady as cordially as she was able. "I have heard of your kindness—"

"Oh! not at all," interrupted Arnold, seating himself by Emily, and squeezing her hand when the aunt's head was turned another way. "I came by the coach ten minutes ago, and hurried to see you as speedily as possible," he added, while his glance met that of her who loved him.

"Did you see my mother, as you passed the house?"

"Merely at the window—she did not recognize me—the coach could not stop, although I requested that favour," was the answer.

"And James is still in London?"

"Yes—at my house," was the deceptive reply.

"I promised I should not be above a day or two absent; so on Wednesday, or Thursday, I shall return. In the meantime, I have taken up my quarters at the — hotel."

"Only five doors up the street," remarked Mrs. Otway. "'Tis a good one too, and cheap, which is its best recommendation. The hotels are really so vilely dear in London, Mr. Arnold, now-a-days, that it's quite shocking. I'm sure I spent—let me see, what did I spend—why, at the — hotel, — square—"

"Indeed, madam, so much as that?" said Arnold, who had been whispering soft things in Emily's ear, while Mrs. Otway slowly drawled out the above sentence; and of course, only catching the last words, he understood nothing.

"As much as what, sir?" asked the old lady.

"Oh! I fancied—that is,—I thought you were at very great expense in London, madam.—My dearest girl," added he, aside to Miss Crawford, while the aunt commenced another harangue, "how delighted I am to be thus enabled to see thee—to talk with—to hear thee—to tell thee my love—and to drink from those lips the enraptured tones of a reciprocal—"

"England than France—is it not so, Mr. Arnold?" were the words that interrupted his impassioned language, and which were the conclusion of some remarks the old lady had made, respecting the comparative cheapness of the two countries, having been frequently at Paris.

"Yes, madam, I agree with you perfectly," returned Arnold, entirely ignorant of what she had been saying. "And now, ladies," he added, taking up his hat, I shall trespass no longer upon your time.

"You will call to-morrow, sir," said Mrs. Otway; "we shall always be delighted to see you."

"A thousand thanks, madam; I shall not fail to take advantage of your very kind invitation;—and after casting a significant look at Emily, Arnold withdrew.

Poor Emily! thou art marked out as a victim of his lusts—the prey to his designs: a fangled net, which thou thyself hast partially though innocently woven, is about to be cast around thee! Oh! that thou may'st escape the specious snare—the complicated meshes!

On the following morning, Arnold again called at Mrs. Otway's house, where he found the unfortunate Hunter seated with Emily and her aunt, and endeavouring to wile away an hour in their society. Mrs. Otway herself had taken a great liking to the unhappy youth, and endeavoured to her utmost to cheer up his sinking spirits by a lively discourse: but he felt the barrenness of joy his heart experienced; and if a smile did ever pass over his pale countenance, it was only transient, resembling the beam which on a cloudy night the sickly moon casts upon the surface of Winter's snow.

After an introduction had been effected, Arnold with his usual elegance of manner, politely questioned him concerning the principal topics of interest at Southampton; and whenever he had an opportunity whispered tender things in the ear of his Emily.

Suddenly Hunter arose, and walked towards the window, while a deep sigh escaped his breast, and he exclaimed almost involuntarily, "What! can I see man happy, when I myself am wretched? is not the sight an addition to my misery?"

"Indeed," remarked Arnold, "all hearts are not really filled with joy, when the lips smile, or when the eyes appear beaming with delight."



Many a fruit is fair and wholesome to the sight, while the core is eaten up with rottenness.

"You are right, sir—very right," exclaimed Hunter, enthusiastically; "and therefore my folly is the greatest in the world, because I cannot, despite of every attempt, conceal the internal state of my feelings."

"Would you play the hypocrite, then?" enquired Emily: "I should think not."

"Yes—if I were able, Miss Crawford; because there is no sin in keeping our griefs within our own breasts: no one is annoyed by that but ourselves—it interrupts no law of moral or social order: but then the fire, ever working internally with all its vigour, would sooner consume the heart as it is consuming mine!"

At this moment another visitor was introduced,

and Hunter took that opportunity to withdraw. The morning slipped rapidly away; and in the evening Arnold was engaged to stay for dinner.

To be brief, during the three or four days he remained at Southampton, he made such progress in his amour, that he doubted not but that Emily must shortly fall a victim to her love and to his desires. Most tender were the adieus that took place between them; and the grief of Emily was only soothed by a promise of his speedy return, as early as possible, to pass a few more days at Southampton. He advised her not to mention his visit to her mother, having previously learnt that Mrs. Otway herself never wrote to that quarter save on business.

So, after mutual farewells, kisses, and tears on the part of the fond, confiding girl, Arnold left

the house, and was not long ere he stepped into a post-chaise on his journey back to London, where he well knew his presence would be required by Rivingstone and young Crawford.

CHAPTER V.

His bosom throbbed high with rapture; and he involuntarily exclaimed, "By God, I will do it!"

ROOKWOOD.

"I wish Arnold would return," said Rivingstone impatiently, as he sipped his wine after dinner; "five days has he been absent, and God only knows what about."

"I wish the same," remarked Crawford, filling his glass. "'Tis useless to remain idly here, while our schemes require discussion."

"Nothing can proceed without him: he finds money when we are not flush from an expedition, and everything we require. Certainly he is a most extraordinary man: any pursuit he undertakes, he perseveres in to the utmost, and never flinches at danger. On that night, when we——"

"Yes—yes—I remember," cried Crawford suddenly, a deep gloom spreading over his countenance at the reminiscence of that apparently dreadful event, to which his companion so frequently and so coolly alluded.

"Hark! I hear some one coming up the staircase: by heavens, 'tis Arnold—I know his step," exclaimed Rivingstone, rising from his chair.

In another minute the person so much required entered the room. After the usual congratulations on meeting, Crawford upbraided him for his long absence; but Arnold, with his wonted address, invented some tale to account for it, without ever alluding to his visit to Southampton; and harmony was speedily restored.

"I have just been reading in the hotel where I stay at the West End," remarked Arnold after a minute's pause, during which he had helped himself to some wine, "an account in the newspaper of Captain Stewart's being robbed the other night by three daring highwaymen! It was not in the least exaggerated; and the adventure of the sergeant with us was also humorously described, without mentioning any name, declaring that for the sake of the gentleman's character, who was out on a drunken freak with two young fashionables, they should forbear any disclosure of that kind. How I laughed when I read the written history of one of the best stratagems my brain ever invented—and it has concocted a few."

"Then this Captain Stewart is really safe?—I am glad of that!" exclaimed Crawford.

"Yes—it appears that not long after we left him on the road, a small detachment accidentally passed on duty that way, and brought him to his senses. They had lanterns with them; still it was lucky they did not trample him to death before they saw him: indeed, it would have been more polite if we had removed him to the side of the road, I think. However, while some of the men bore their officer back to Hounslow, the others pursued the robbers. You know the rest," added Arnold with a smile.

"Now, then, exemplify your cunning once more," said Rivingstone, addressing Arnold, "in giving advice relative to the plan we proposed the other day. It must not be done without caution, and great circumspection. In the first place, Craw-

ford, do you consider yourself competent to persevere in so daring an imposture?"

"Yes—and to sustain the character too," replied the youth eagerly. "Trust me for that. This is a plot I should glory in—the more particularly as——"

"There is no scrapping in it," interrupted Rivingstone with a smile. "That is what you would say. But let us hear Arnold's sentiments."

"You shall have them. Listen! In my opinion, John Bull will more readily swallow a good lie at once, than a thing told by halves. We must either state an immense sum, or nothing at all. If we said a hundred thousand pounds, inquiries, queries, and investigations would soon detect us: but if we give out that the property is worth a cool five or six millions, the whole nation will be so effectually astonished, that even the King will tremble on his throne, fearing that so great a capital would be ample enough to overturn the very monarchy itself. The characteristic of an Englishman is the most stupid credulity where impudence dares assert something bordering on impossibility—that is, as near impossibility as the sublime is to the ridiculous; at all events mightily improbable. Anything not very—very extraordinary would fall to stupefy him, of course: and it is only upon the hope of striking dumb the inquisitive and impertinent that our plan has a chance of success."

"Your arguments are excellent," remarked Crawford: "and your opinion is in strict accordance with my own."

"And with mine too," added Rivingstone. "However, let us proceed."

"'Tis well so far, then," continued Arnold: "now for the plan. It would be better if some old fool were found—and there are abundance in the world—who has still a sufficiency of sense to enter into our schemes, and to co-operate with us. He might, as if it were by accident, become acquainted with Crawford at some large town or watering-place, during a fortnight's stay at an hotel; it would then be plausible to state that Crawford had by his attentions so won the old gentleman's heart, that he was determined to adopt him, and leave him this tremendous fortune, which may consist chiefly in Portuguese property. Then the supposed patron might bring his supposed adopted son to London, and take him to some hotel, where we will supply them with money to throw about in all directions——"

"Allow me to observe one thing," interrupted Rivingstone. "Would it not be better to have the statement of the old gentleman's tremendous wealth first whispered at the town or watering-place you alluded to, so that when they came together to London, the fame of the property would have arrived before them?"

"You are right, Rivingstone," cried Arnold. "then another whisper in the metropolis might publish the adoption of a certain youth, who had saved the old man's life, at Cheltenham, Bath, or any where we chose to arrange as the spot. The metropolis would be on the tip-toe of expectation and curiosity to catch a glimpse of an individual that could cover Bond-street with guineas; report would add a thousand embellishments—confusion of opinions would be the instant result—argument, assertion, contradiction, and supposition would favour our plot, because the world will forget to talk of the foundation, in quarrelling

about immaterial parts of the fabric we are to raise."

"This is excellent!" cried Crawford in an ecstasy of joy, which he did not attempt to conceal. "By the Lord I'll undertake it, for I feel confident—nay, more than certain, if possible, of success!"

"And even if we fail, there are other theatres in the world for our comedies besides London," remarked Rivingstone.

"Then all that now remains is for you Rivingstone—I mean as to preliminaries," said Arnold, who was determined to have as little to do with the dangerous part of these plans as possible, dreading the consequences of an exposure, in case of failure, we presume, and probably having other reasons for his mode of conduct; "because," continued he, "you must now busy yourself in finding out such an individual as the one I mentioned—an old fellow not known about the capital—while I must engage myself in providing the necessary funds to pay the various expenses incidental to the trips to Cheltenham or Brighton, as well as to fit out—"

"I have it!" cried Rivingstone, after a moment's consideration—"I have it now!" and he snapped his fingers with delight.

"What have you thought of?" enquired Crawford eagerly.

"Why," replied the other, "on Bagshot heath, not far from the plantations on the estate of the Duke of Gloucester, there's an old man and his wife—"

"The vicinity is dangerous," remarked Arnold, alluding to the neighbouring residence of Mrs. Crawford.

"Not at all: the old man is of eccentric habits, never goes out, and never admits any one to his hut."

"How do you know him in that case, then?" asked Crawford.

"Never mind—I do know him: and that is sufficient: His wife does every thing for him; and a vagabond of a son supplies them the wherewith to support existence: he has been put into the county gaol not once, but twenty times for poaching; yet fortune has generally favoured him when brought to trial. Often have I laid concealed for a few hours at this said cottage, while the police were on the alert, till I could get safely back to my little place at Hounslow, where I lived without being suspected in the least. However, to proceed: this old man, whose name is Dimmock, would probably enter into our schemes: he is not a fool, nor would he set the Thames on fire. At the same time, if I am not mightily deceived, he is the one suited for us."

"On this matter I leave you to judge," remarked Arnold; "act as your discretion and knowledge of the Dimmock family will allow you."

"And my mother?" enquired Crawford suddenly. "Shall I write to her before we proceed on our plan, and speak of indifferent subjects, the gaiety of London, &c.?"

"Yes—you had better, James," answered Arnold; "but forget to put your address upon the letter. When the grand statement is made, she will be deceived as well as the rest, till we have amassed considerable sums of money, and are safe in France."

Arnold hung down his head for a moment: a

deep struggle took place in his bosom. Should he do that which would disappoint the most affectionate of mothers at the same time as it duped the world? or should he abandon a project which seemed to promise immense gains? There were but these alternatives; for of course he could not for an instant imagine that she would become a partner in his plans of villainy.

Arnold marked this combat,—this war of feelings, and almost dreaded its result. The words "And my mother!" were pronounced with energy—with enthusiasm, at the same time with regret. But the battle was short. Ambition spread all its glowing colours to the eyes of Crawford; and those were powerful enough to absorb the melting hues of virtue and love. Ambition—that delusive vision—that bane of empires, of principalities, of man, and of feeling—ambition in this case stepped officiously forward, and stamped the decision of one who was hovering between good and evil. It stifled the remnants of compunction that lingered in the bosom of Crawford: it led him onward—probably to his ruin. With a decided air he looked up, but said nothing. He was determined to prosecute the undertaking: Arnold saw the conclusion of his deliberation, and was satisfied.

The three friends sat up till a late hour on this night, and it was agreed that their measures should not be too precipitate; that time must be allowed for Arnold to exert himself by his own peculiar means (the sources of which were unknown to his companions) to procure the necessary funds for the undertaking; and that Rivingstone should proceed at his leisure to the dwelling of old Dimmock. Crawford was the only one who was to remain idle; and he, in preference to returning to his mother till all should be ready (for he dreaded to meet the parent he was so grossly deceiving), was supplied with an abundance of cash from the produce of Captain Stewart's pocket-book (the notes having been successfully changed) wherewith to amuse himself on the wide theatre of pleasures which London so amply affords to those who have the means to enjoy them.

CHAPTER VI.

Houses, churches, mix'd together,
Streets, unpleasant in all weather,
Prisons, palaces contiguous,
Gates, a bridge, the Thames irriguous,
Gaudy things enough to tempt ye,
Showy outsides, insides empty,
Bubbles, trades, mechanic arts,
Coaches, wheel-barrows, and carts,
* * * * *

This is London: how d'ye like it?

Elegant Extracts.

In the meantime Mrs. Crawford and her beautiful daughter, Catherine, continued to amuse themselves and each other in their little cottage near Bagshot. Catherine was of that disposition, which, ever gay and lively, frightened the advance of melancholy, and forbade visionary sorrows to approach. For real griefs, of course, her delicate mind felt in proportion to their extent; but these had been but few:—the loss of her father, and the changing disposition of her brother were the greatest.

Her fairy form was to be seen in the morning attending to the flowers which she reared and nourished as if they were animated with life, and

gifted with intelligence sufficient to thank the kind care they experienced at her hands. Her little feet trod lightly and cautiously amongst the borders; her fingers, diminutively tapered to a fault, were ever prompt to support with a stick or stay the drooping bud, or the evergreen plant; and then, when the refreshing rains of heaven failed, and the dews of night were scarcely capable of administering sufficient nutriment, she would fetch water, and restore new life, new vigour to the beauties of nature that she loved.

Yes, Catherine—those flowers you cherished, were emblems of your innocence; their loveliness was characteristic of thine; their insensibility alone was at variance with thine accomplishments. We have described thy sister Emily—we have seen beauties in many climes—we have retained in our memory the features of the Grecian, the Italian, and the warm Spaniard—but never, never did we witness thine equal. Long, long could we linger to gaze upon that painting where thy countenance is preserved—where thine image, as thou wast at this period, is retained; and did we not feel compassion for our reader, never should we be wearied of expatiating on thy charms, thy virtues, and thine excellencies.

How different wast thou from thy sister; how different even would have been thy conduct, had thy young heart, at this period of thy life, already known the feeling of love, like her's. Thou would'st not have condescended to hypocrisy—thou would'st not have concealed from an affectionate parent an iota—a tittle of thine actions; all would have been confessed—all revealed without reserve to the ear of her that gave thee birth.

But to continue. A week had passed since the departure of Emily, when Mrs. Crawford, emboldened by the comparatively kind letter she had received from Sir George Mornay, and anxious to provide for her son in the army, or some other honourable profession, if possible, determined to take a little trip to London with her daughter, and supplicate an audience of the baronet. A certain pride would have restrained her from doing this, had she not contemplated the future, and felt uneasy on her son's account. Mr. Arnold had certainly often declared that he was the special protector of Crawford; and as he was believed by the family—we mean the female part, James being aware of the contrary—to possess a competent income, the youth's prospects in that quarter were favourable to his mother's eyes. That same pride, however, which could not prevent the mother from seeking an interview with her haughty relative, was annoyed in this instance, for she did not like the idea of receiving so many kindnesses from an individual who three years previously was a complete stranger. She was also desirous of surprising Arnold in this matter, and of conferring pleasure on her son, by procuring for him, as we before stated, a commission in the army. She therefore informed Catherine of her intentions; and as the lively girl had never seen the metropolis, her joy was excessive.

On the following morning at half-past eleven, a post-chaise was procured from Bagshot, into which Mrs. Crawford and Catherine stepped, and started for London.

Every thing was entirely new to Catherine as they entered the metropolis. She had heard of its vast extent—she had read of the buildings, the parks, the river, the wonders it possessed;

and her dark black eyes sparkled with delight, as the carriage, by the direction of her mother, drove through Hyde-Park into Oxford-Street, not only to avoid the crowd of vehicles continually passing in Piccadilly, but also to afford her daughter an opportunity of seeing that spot which beauty, wealth, fashion, and grandeur sought daily, urged by various motives—ostentation, pride, or love! It was, however, too early at present, being scarcely three o'clock, for the park to be filled; and Catherine thus lost that occasion of witnessing one of the gayest scenes London can boast of. The carriage rolled quickly up Oxford-street, and stopped before the house in which Mrs. Crawford had taken lodgings by means of a letter written the day previous.

Mrs. Crawford resolved to postpone her visit to the house of her obstinate relative till the next day; and therefore contemplated sending for her son to pass the evening with them, without making him aware of the real object of her trip to London. But when Catherine examined the only letter he had written since his departure, they were not a little annoyed to find no address upon it. Attributing this to inadvertency, they were obliged to console themselves as well as they could, Mrs. Crawford not considering it proper to take her daughter to either of the theatres without a male protector.

She accordingly wrote a short note to Mr. Arnold, and sent it to the hotel, in—street, whither he had directed her and James always to forward their correspondence. The person who carried it, returned and said that, on application to the landlord, he found Mr. Arnold had been out of London lately, and that he had not visited the hotel for some days. Here was another disappointment: Mrs. Crawford knew he had a house in town, according to what he had often stated, and whereat she supposed James to be living at present; but this address was also unknown to her. She and her daughter were therefore constrained to pass the evening alone together.

On the following morning Mrs. Crawford stepped into a hackney-coach alone, and proceeded to Portland Place, having desired to be taken to the house of Sir George Mornay. The driver knew well the mansion of the baronet mentioned, and drew up to one of the handomest in that quarter. The bell was rung, and a powdered domestic answered the appeal. To the enquiries of Mrs. Crawford, the servant declared that his master had not been at home for some days, that he knew not where he was, that he frequently came in suddenly for a few hours, and that his return was quite uncertain. There was of course no alternative left; and Mrs. Crawford returned to her daughter, to whom she related the unsuccessful visit she had paid. A letter was therefore penned by Mrs. Crawford, stating that she had come to town with the express intention of seeing her relative, that she hoped he would grant her an interview, and that he would be so condescending as to reply to her appeal on his arrival at his dwelling in Portland Place. The letter had not been dispatched above three hours, when the door opened, and Arnold entered the room.

"Ah! Mr. Arnold—we waited your arrival with impatience: last night we sadly wanted you to escort us to the theatre; to-night—"

"I will accompany you, my dear madam with the greatest pleasure."

"And James——"

"Shall be of our party: I will fetch him presently," returned Arnold.

Mrs. Crawford then unfolded to her friend the object of her visit to London, although at first she had intended to conceal it. He gently chided her for not having informed him of her wishes, and declared his resolution of waiting personally upon Sir George Mornay in behalf of Mrs. Crawford.

"You remember," said he, "that my influence procured the pension you now enjoy; I will exert it once more. Sir George Mornay will be in town to-morrow, as I observe by the papers that he is expected; and I shall not fail to see him on your behalf. But I will now hasten to my own abode and bring James to see you. I should ask you there myself, but delicacy prevents such an invitation:—"

and Arnold chuckled inwardly at the excellence of his excuse, while Mrs. Crawford admired his conduct more than ever.

To be brief, he bade the ladies a short farewell, and instantly proceeded in a hackney coach to Leadenhall-street. Luckily Crawford was at home, for Rivingstone had gone to Bagshot, upon the business already alluded to.

After the first burst of astonishment on the part of the youth, at hearing that his mother was in town, he remained silent and thoughtful: but Arnold tutored him how to behave, what replies to make, as well as to declare that he was living at Arnold's house, in such and such a street, no matter which—London is a large place, and it was easy to fix upon one. This was speedily arranged: and in another hour the worthy couple were seated with Mrs. Crawford and Catherine at their lodgings in Oxford-street.

When evening came, after having dined together, they all proceeded to the Haymarket, where Catherine was delighted with the scene, the performance, and the crowds of spectators present. Arnold appeared intimate with many of the most fashionable portion of them: to one he nodded familiarly, to another bowed politely, and to others distantly, as his humour or acquaintance with them directed. But to none did he address himself that evening—he forbore quitting the box, fearful of being engaged in conversation: indeed, whatever were his motives, he appeared to be eager to shun the interchange of words with any; or at all events, if he did whisper a syllable to a soul, he took care it should be out of the hearing of his party. His behaviour was, however, received as a compliment by Mrs. Crawford to herself and family: and Arnold rose, if possible, still higher in her esteem by this very circumstance.

On the following morning Arnold and James Crawford again called at the lodgings in Oxford-street; and Arnold, having watched his opportunity, whispered to Mrs. Crawford "that he had seen Sir George Mornay, who had promised to write in the course of the day." He concluded by advising her not to inform her son of the matter till something was arranged, and till the reply was known. To this Mrs. Crawford acceded.

Arnold then managed to retire shortly, taking James with him, but promising to return early in the evening. An hour after his departure, the following letter was delivered by a servant, with Sir George Mornay's compliments, and enclosing a note for twenty pounds:—

"Madam,

"Your friend, Mr. Arnold, favoured me with a call this morning, and informed me of your arrival in town as well as of your wishes with regard to your son, Mr. James Crawford. Also I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date. It is impossible for me to see you, or any part of your family, from a multiplicity of reasons; therefore, if you value my favour, you will never repeat your solicitations on that head. As to your son, I promise that something shall be done for him as speedily as possible; but if you will allow me to offer my advice, you will conceal my intention of benefiting him for the present.

"I have enclosed a small sum—as I before informed you that my means are peculiarly limited—sufficient to cover the expenses you may have incurred by your journey to London, and it is my particular desire that you return as early as possible to your residence near Bagshot. I shall not cease to befriend you, and the contents of this letter, with the advice it offers, are founded upon the best wishes for your welfare, and that of your children.

"I have the honour to remain, Madam,

"Your's, etc., etc."

"GEORGE MORNAV."

"Portland-place."

"What an extraordinary man!" cried Catherine, as her mother concluded this curious epistle. "He apparently desires our happiness, and yet so obstinately refuses to see us: he must be a strange being, this Sir George Mornay!"

"He is, Catherine, I should imagine. However, we must not complain; he assents to the chief object of my visit, and promises faithfully in behalf of James. We must follow his directions and return home to-morrow."

"To-morrow, mamma!" exclaimed Catherine quickly, for she was not half wearied of London.

"Yes, my love; but I promise that on another occasion I will show you more of the metropolis. I am certain your good sense will prove to you the necessity of obeying Sir George Mornay, since we are dependent on his bounty and interest."

"How I should like to see this disagreeable baronet," cried Catherine, pouting. "He seems to give his orders to us with the same imperiousness which I fancy he uses when talking to his domestics."

"That very habit of command," returned Mrs. Crawford, "often becomes the leading feature of a man's conduct in every case."

"Then he may mean kindly, at all events," said the amiable girl, glancing over the letter. "But we must hide this: or else James may see it, contrary to Sir George Mornay's wishes."

On the following morning, James and Arnold called to see Mrs. Crawford and Catherine; and they were not annoyed to find that the ladies were about to return home immediately. The post-chaise drew up to the door—the trunks were tied on—the adieus were said—and Mrs. Crawford, with her daughter, soon found themselves whirling away at a rapid rate on their road homewards.

They spoke but little—each being engaged with her own thoughts; and scarcely ten words had passed between them, when they arrived at Hounslow. Here the postilion intended to stop a short time; but as he drove up to the inn, the fore-axle-tree gave way, and the carriage, falling forwards, was nearly overturned.

The ladies screamed with affright; but the door was thrown open, and they were happily extricated without having sustained the slightest injury, though terribly alarmed. The postilion was swearing at his horses in a most scientific and earnest manner, although not the slightest blame was attributable to the "hinfurnal dumb hanni-

males wot had caused that ere unforeseen misfortune!" when Mrs. Crawford and Catherine came to themselves again. Looking round to discover who had assisted them in their dilemma, a young officer, dressed in the uniform of the cavalry regiment stationed at Hounslow, politely stepped up to them, and begged to enquire whether they had had met with any injury.

"Not the smallest, Sir, I can assure you," returned Mrs. Crawford; "and if it be to you that we are indebted—"

"Oh! do not mention it," said the officer, whose manners were as agreeable as his countenance was handsome. "I happened to be standing here, and seeing the accident, rushed forward to open the door. As you have escaped all injury, I cannot but regard this as a happy event—for I am selfish—since it has procured me the honour of your acquaintance."

Mrs. Crawford bowed politely.

"But you had better walk in while the accident is being remedied. Here, Joseph," said the officer to a waiter, "shew these ladies to a parlour!" and they followed the servant to one, the stranger still attending them.

When the domestic had quitted the room, the officer again desired to know if there were anything he could do for the comfort of the ladies.

"My own carriage is here at your service," he added—and without waiting for a reply, quitted the apartment.

In a few minutes he returned.

"I have made enquiries," said he, "and find that two hours cannot repair the injury your chaise has sustained: I have therefore taken the liberty of placing my carriage at your disposal."

"Indeed, Sir," said Mrs. Crawford, "I could not think of accepting your very kind offer."

But she was overruled by the officer, who at length persuaded her softly, though firmly, to proceed in his vehicle: and in five minutes a beautiful carriage, drawn by two horses, drove up to the door.

"Captain Stewart's carriage waits!" cried a servant, who entered.

"Remove the trunks into it from the chaise, then," returned the officer; and his orders were speedily obeyed. "You will use it as you please," continued he, addressing the ladies and casting a tender glance towards the beautiful Catherine, whose hand trembled in his, as he helped her to ascend the steps.

A thousand thanks were given by Mrs. Crawford—and Captain Stewart took a respectful leave, "till he should have the pleasure of seeing them again, an honour he expected shortly."

He then desired his coachman to drive speedily, directing him whither he was to proceed, having previously ascertained that point from the postillion of the chaise; and the carriage drove off accordingly, leaving its owner's bosom filled with the image of the lovely Catherine.

Nor did she forget him immediately. During the whole of the ride from Hounslow to their own home, Catherine talked of nothing but the handsome officer: and indeed he was handsome. His figure was tall and excellently formed: his hair was brown, curling almost into ringlets;—his forehead was high;—his air was manly, and his exterior becoming the situation he held. He wore a small moustache upon the upper lip, which served to set off more peculiarly his ivory teeth,

when smiles revealed them. As for his birth, he was the younger son of a noble lord, who allowed him an excellent income, on which he lived well, without embarrassment, and without contracting debts. His honour was unimpeachable—his character blameless: he was respected by his brother officers, and beloved by his men. His manners were strictly gentlemanly, yet frank and bland to an extreme; his heart ever prompted him to relieve the necessitous: in fine, his bounty was profuse to a fault.

Of course with regard to his character Catherine knew nothing; but it is not astonishing if she talked and thought of the handsome exterior and polished manners of Captain Stewart. Indeed, after she and her mother had been some time seated once more in their own little parlour at the cottage, Catherine's tongue still gave utterance to the ideas she had formed concerning one who had so materially administered to their comfort.

CHAPTER VII.

Here lurched a wretche who had not crept abroad
For forty years, ne face of mortal seen:
In chamber brooding like a loathly toad;
And sure his linen was not very clean.

Castle of Indolence.

MR. RIVINGTON knew more of the inmates of the solitary hovel, near the Duke of Gloucester's park, than he had chosen to confess. Many a time and often had he taken refuge there, when some daring deed had almost led to his capture; nor unfrequently were the choice articles which he found upon the highway, in the pockets or carriages of travellers, secreted by the worthy Mrs. Dimmock, who was not sorry to see her patron, as she called him, when he now entered the cottage.

"Ah! Mister Rivington," cried she, "it's a 'nation time sure-ly since I seed ye here. Wot sport are ye 'ad lately on the road? But these are d—d bad times for the gemmen of the profession wot's genteel: them *cracksmen** gets the best off now-a-days, though a few does manage to be *scragged* † sometimes."

"Yes, in truth, Mrs. Dimmock: but where is the old man this morning?"

"He's in the crib—lying on his bed there, the lazy old villain, I'll warrant ye, Mister Rivington. Vy, wot d'ye think? he ar'n't been out of the 'ouse these three months and more; while I'm obligated to get the blunt, by sending my *kid* ‡ to filch on the preserves and do a little business in that way at Bagshot. Sure the beaks were arter the poor urchin the other day; and he scarcely escaped the *darbies*§, for they had fast hold on him, before he could make his lucky."

"Was he actually caught, then?" inquired Rivington.

"Yes—but he w'orn't taken afore the justice, for I 'appened to have a little loose money by great chance, and with that I happily bought hoff the traps, the warnints! Howsomever, to day he's gone to see the *milling-coves*|| wot fout at Maidenhead: so I 'pose he'll have a riglar flare up and come home as tosticated as the beastes in the fields, the drunken warlet!"

* Burglars. † Hanged. ‡ Son.
§ Chains. || Prize fighters.

"Will it be long before I can see the old man," asked Rivingstone, seating himself in a chair, and looking anxiously towards the inner room of the cottage.

"No—no—I'll call him in a few minutes, and no mistake," returned the talkative dame, determined not to be disappointed of her chat. "But I say, is there haay thing in the vind that ye vant my held husband for?"

"Nothing partickler."

"Oh! nothing partickler—well—well," continued the elegant Mrs. Dimmock, putting some turf upon the fire to boil the pot which contained the dinner; for it was now nearly twelve o'clock. "By the by, my son Bill was at 'Ounslow t'other day, a week or for'night agone, and there was a terrible pitch up sure-ly—a nation clatter as hever was. There was tidings of a prig having stop-ped one captain Stewart of the riment there, and *knappett** a morocky reader† containing riglar *finniest*‡ of the Bank of Hingland for I forget how much—some two or three hundred pounds, that's sartain. Says I to our Bill, says I, 'That ere's Mister Rivingstone, and no mistake.'—He says, says he, 'He might ha' been von, but there was others as well, I heard say,' says he. So then I said to myself, says I, 'He's got hold of some new pals,§ ten to von.'—Is it so, Mister Rivingstone—tell us?"

"Oh! yes, to be sure. But I am beginning—only beginning, I assure you, to be rather in a hurry; for my business presses," returned he.

"It does, does it?" said Mrs. Dimmock coolly. "I'll call him directly, for you've always done the thing what's right by me. 'Twas but the last time save two that you was here, that you give me a *quid*|| for myself; and then, ven you bought the pistols of the old man, there was three *bob*** and a *tanner*†† hover and above, which you also givd' me: and you did it in the most *nibsome*‡‡ way in the world. 'No, no, Missus Dimmock,' you says, says you, 'damn and blast the tin; §§ keep it for yourself, my dear, and *tip us your mawley*||| into the bargain.'—did ye not?"

"Very probably I did—and I will answer for the language. But will you summon your good husband if you please?" cried Rivingstone.

The old woman now really rose in earnest, to do as she was desired; and her fat person was dragged lazily through the small door that opened to an inner apartment, which she had elegantly denominated a *crib*.

The one where Rivingstone was seated, exhibited not those marks of poverty which the exterior of the dwelling would have warranted a person to suppose must exist within. The shelves were covered with white plates, and various culinary articles; the floor, formed of red bricks, once glazed, was spread with fresh sand; and the table in the middle was covered by a clean though coarse napkin, in preparation for dinner.

The old woman herself was not so untidy in her appearance, as she was inelegant in her choice of words. Her years might be about sixty; but her form was excessively capacious, and her face healthy.

This was not, however, the case with the individual she pushed into the apartment. He was

a man of five or six years older than his wife, with emaciated look, and a trembling gait, but possessing a good intellect, and a disposition suited to the business he was desired by Rivingstone to undertake. Moreover, his conversation was free from those mellifluous expressions and fascinating phrases which embellished that made use of by his wife. He had been a soldier when very young, then a respectable tradesman in Dublin or Cork; we forget which: and lastly he had fallen to his present predicament "by unforeseen calamities, and unavavoidable misfortunes, in those times of agricultural distress and commercial embarrassment," as every street-walking mendicant observes. For many years he had led an indolent kind of life at the cottage where we now find him, having married a low woman, who picked up money in various ways, and never troubled him to exert himself in the least towards contributing to the means of their support and existence. This suited his indolent habits; and he cared not whether his son became an honest man or a villain, as long as he was suffered to remain quiet.

Such was the individual who now entered the room, and humbly bowed to Mr. Rivingstone.

"I have come," said the worthy associate of the worthy Arnold and Crawford, when the old man had seated himself—"I have come, Master Dimmock, to speak to you concerning a particular affair, and to engage you in a business which will make our fortunes. In fact, it will open the purse of the money-leader, overcome the avarice of the Jew, command credit at every shop in London, and will probably enable a young man to wed the richest heiress in the land."

"Indeed! you speak fairly, Sir, and may command me. Old as I am, I could enter into any scheme that promises so much."

"Yes—but then you are too indolent, I fear—too much given to idle habits, and inactivity," pursued Rivingstone, as he mused upon his plans.

"You think so! When I need not exert myself, I love tranquillity and quietness; but when I am obliged to arouse those dormant energies, I shall not be found a sluggard."

"There's one thing in his favour, Mister Rivingstone," said the good lady, "he a'n't given to the daffy*: that ere I'll be sworn to upon my 'davit, if it was the last day of my hexistence in this vursal world of our'n."

"The business is important and requires circumspection," continued Rivingstone. "The least inaccuracy of conduct (the slightest inadvertent allusion, will betray everything: Memory, judgment; and as much impudence as you please, will be essentially necessary; you will have to play your part before numbers—high, and low, perhaps; in fact the scheme is one of the most glorious, at the same time the most dangerous, ever read or heard of."

"Still, if you have thought me competent to undertake any part in the matter, I am resolved to proceed, whatever is its nature. I am old and poor—I have nothing to lose, but every thing to gain: what then need I fear? if I am discovered in any way, who cares? and since the—"

"Vy, you held fool; you ar'n't a going to moralise at this time o'day?" inquired his wife, more willing that Rivingstone's wish should be attended to than even himself: "can't you keep

* Stole. † A pocket-book. ‡ Bank-notes.
§ Companions. || Sovereign. ** Shillings.
†† A Sixpence. ‡‡ Gentlemenly. §§ Silver coins.
|| Give us your hand.

* Liquor.

present. I have been obliged, for certain reasons, to part with a portion of that sum which Captain Stewart supplied, good soul!—By the bye, Rivingstone, you must tutor the old man in such a way, that he may never betray himself in conversation: I had rather we enlisted a gentleman into the service!"

"Rest assured, my dear Arnold, that all will be well. It would appear more suspicious if it were a regular gentleman; otherwise I might enact the part myself," he added, laughing. "But a vulgar sort of fellow is far more likely to be the possessor of eight or nine millions than any one else."

"There is sound sense in that," remarked Crawford; "and he is also the more likely to be a parsimonious man. A gentleman, or an individual who from his birth and education *ought* to have liberal ideas, would not be credited when stated his revenues were so enormous, and his expenses so small!"

"So far, so good," cried Arnold. "The hour is growing late; to-morrow I shall join you early:—till then, farewell, my friends."

And he accordingly departed, leaving Rivingstone and Crawford to seek their respective chambers.

CHAPTER VIII.

Here he was interrupted by a knife,
With "Dams your eyes, your money or your life!"
DON JUAN.

We shall not weary our gentle reader with a strict narrative of all the various debates that took place in Leadenhall-street concerning the nefarious schemes already alluded to. Let us then suppose that Rivingstone and Crawford called on the old man near Bagshot; that they arranged their plans to the satisfaction of all parties; and that Dimmock, being well supplied with apparel and money, set off for Cheltenham, where he took up his quarters at the Plough Hotel. A couple of days afterwards a post-chaise drove up to the door, and a young gentleman, unattended, but of genteel appearance, leapt out.

This was James Crawford.

Here we shall leave them to prosecute their plans as already agreed upon, and hasten to other matters.

Rivingstone returned to his home at Hounslow, till his services should be again wanted, and till the event of the scheme was known. Arnold bade him adieu for the present, and took his place in the coach for Southampton.

But in the meantime, Captain Stewart had called at the cottage, and made his enquiries after the health of Mrs. Crawford and Catherine. He was received with cordiality; for the favour he had done them, and the gentlemanly deficiency of his manners assured him a welcome reception. Luncheon was set before him; and a conversation arose respecting the highwaymen who occasionally dared to molest the midnight traveller; for of late years their number had gradually diminished. Some had fallen by the rigorous hand of justice—others had been sent on a foreign excursion across the seas at the expense of the government; and, in fine, seldom was it now that the coachman was stopped, or the horseman arrested on his road. Besides, the establishment of the Military College—a place expressly adapted to fill the army with officers of *excellent* morality, as they commence

their lessons at the tender age of thirteen, when early impressions are fixed the more indelibly—and a regiment being continually stationed at Hounslow, were great impediments in the way of the nocturnal plunderer.

Captain Stewart related the circumstances of the robbery that had lately been committed upon him, and the loss he had sustained. Mrs. Crawford congratulated him upon his narrow escape: he then rose to depart, soliciting permission to renew his visit—a request that was immediately granted. With a graceful bow he retired; and Catherine felt *sorry* that he was gone.

She knew not why, but she could have listened to his conversation the whole day, without feeling fatigued: at least she thought so, and so think *so* too; for the germinations of affection were budding in the bosoms of both.

Captain Stewart was also annoyed at being obliged by common courtesy not to extend his visit to too great a length; and during his ride to Hounslow, he never once ceased thinking of the beautiful and innocent girl he left behind him.

At the mess table on the same day his brother-officers rallied him on the absence of his manner; but he replied briefly, and soon withdrew to his own room, still pondering on the lovely Catherine and all she had said during his morning's visit.

He however determined to avail himself of the permission granted him to renew it; and at the end of the week he dressed himself as carefully as possible, and mounting his horse, rode off with a light heart towards the cottage.

Catherine could not conceal the pleasure she experienced in seeing him once more, for a deep blush spread a vermillion glow on her fair face, vying with the hue of those lips where another Anthony might have sealed his destruction.

The Captain was invited to stay to dinner—an invitation that required no repetition. The morning then passed rapidly away; a walk in the garden, an inspection of every flower Catherine herself had cultivated, and a diversified conversation filled up the fitting time. The evening also slipped too—oh! far too quickly away; and when he once more, as the clock in the passage proclaimed the hour of ten, arose to return to Hounslow, their eyes met; and though the glance of each was instantly withdrawn, Stewart read the fact of Catherine's inclination towards him, while her extreme innocence and inexperience prevented her from making a similar discovery. Still she felt pleased that his eyes beamed tenderly on her for an instant—that single look dwelt long in her memory!

The officer soon mounted his horse again, and was proceeding along the road at a moderate pace, when suddenly some one started from the hedge, and laid hold of the bridle; and before Stewart could collect himself, the robber hurled him to the ground.

The night was clear—the moon rode high and beautifully in the vast regions of immensity, dispersing her silver rays around.

Stewart rose from the dust, quick as lightning: a pistol was presented to his breast by the hardy assailant, and as speedily dashed aside. Stewart was powerful, although he had been taken by surprise. To seize the highwayman was the matter of a moment: a severe struggle ensued, when luckily a late coach came up, and the

ruffian was carefully secured. The Captain bound his hands, and made him mount on the outside of the vehicle, the interior being full.

When they reached Hounslow, the highwayman was taken from the coach, and lodged in the strong room at the barracks, where sentinels were placed over him till he could be handed over to the grasp of justice in the morning. Meantime the coachman bore a note to Bow-street, desiring that an officer might be sent down to take the malefactor into custody. By nine o'clock on the following day the runners arrived, and the highwayman was conveyed to the office at Bow-street to undergo his examination. He did not attempt to deny the deed; and Captain Stewart, much against his will, now that the business verged towards a crisis, heard him fully committed for trial, and ordered off to Newgate.

CHAPTER IX.

Gently glides the serpent whose sting is most surely fraught with death; and insidious are the wiles of the fame-blasting seducer.

Introduction.

In the meantime, Arnold prosecuted his pretended suit with Emily at Southampton—that charming Emily whom he found fresh and beautiful as ever!

At the back of Mrs. Otway's dwelling was a delicious garden, with a summer-house in a retired spot, surrounded by twining jasmines and by the clustering boughs of the sportive clematis. Thither the beams of the scorching meridian sun could but languidly penetrate;—and there the odours of sweet flowers gave perfume to the evening breeze. It was such a spot as that where, in the poetry of Persian bards, we read of the fond Megnoun whispering tales of love to his beautiful Leliah; or where Hafiz might have composed his admired poems to the roses in the bosom of his mistress Pancherillah.

In this delightful place Arnold and his Emily were seated. He told her of the extent of his love, while she listened with rapture and joy; then he declared his intention—falsely declared his resolution of speedily communicating with her mother on an honourable marriage; and as he spoke those apparently honied words which came from a venomous tongue, Emily's heart beat quickly and she returned the thrilling kiss that he impressed upon her vermilion lips.

Her eyes sparkled as they met the tender glance which Arnold cast on her; and she yielded her waist to his encroaching arm.

It was almost the delicious hour of sun-set:—a stillness, that rendered the evening more enchanting, prevailed around—the flowers were beginning to hang their heads, as if in preparation for slumber—and the sky gradually became darker, as the God of Day sank down to the embraces of the western ocean.

One hand of Emily was clasped in one of Arnold's;—his arm still encircled her waist, and he toyed with that voluptuous bosom where the heart lay which beat for him.

Her head reclined upon his shoulder—her luxuriant hair tangled with his: even their breaths mingled. Frequent kisses inflamed their blood; and Emily felt a kind of joyous trembling come over her, as this tender dalliance seemed to prognosticate a fatal result.

Her bosom heaved to the pressure of the seducer's hand—and her better sentiments fled at every repeated embrace—she made but a slight resistance—all was still—all was favourable—the opportunity was irresistible;—and with only a single sigh, she resigned, in a burning moment of intoxicating passion, that jewel which is ever a far fairer ornament to lovely woman than all the precious wealth which the mines of Golconda could produce for her adornment!

She sank upon the seat—and Arnold succeeded in completing her ruin!

But when the thrilling instants of guilty gladness were over—when she was once more enabled to reflect—a torrent of tears betrayed her mental agony.

Vainly for a long time did Arnold attempt to soothe her;—she gave herself up to despair. By degrees, however, her grief became moderate; her villainous seducer swore by everything most holy that he would shortly demand her hand in marriage of her mother: then her tears fell less rapidly, and she sank into his arms, declaring that all he had ruined her, she must trust to his honour, and deliver herself over to his mercy. He promised faithfully—she became pacified, and gave herself up, now that the first plunge was made, to the luxuries of love.

When they again sought the drawing-room, Emily—poor deluded girl! had so far composed herself, that her aunt failed to notice any little alteration there might have been in her looks. Yet ever and anon, she turned red and pale as suddenly as the canvas of a ship, when shifting with the wind, alters its hues in the rays of the sun: then a single tender glance from Arnold recalled her scattered ideas.

Let us reflect—it will be an useful lesson—on the atrocity of the case. A young, a lovely, a too confiding girl is basely ruined by a villain whose heart is fraught only with lust, but who is loved to distraction by the being he takes advantage of. Let us remember that unfortunately these instances are frequent, and far from extraordinary in the world:—let us contemplate the terrible evils they entail on the miserable victim of guilty passions,—and, oh! let us essay to close our hearts as much as possible against the approach of those desires which threaten such awful consequences to our helpless fellow-creatures!

Their characters for ever gone—their peace of mind destroyed—their hearts almost broken by treachery,—themselves degraded, aye! cast from the rank in society they once held,—spurned, condemned, spit upon by the haughty and unfeeling individual whose name is haply unimpeachable;—then seen patrolling the streets to earn a precarious livelihood by the sale of their person,—drinking deep to banish care,—and lastly rendering up their parting sigh either in a work-house, or in a miserable garret, where not a single eye sheds the balmy drop of sympathy upon them—where no fond mother, no affectionate husband, nor kind friend enlivens the last moments of feeble existence—and where Memory, during a gloomy retrospection over the actions of a mis-spent life, can remark but little to afford the slightest consolation:—this—deceitful man, is all thou bringest on her whom thou didst render the victim of thy lust—this, hard-hearted villain, is the sketch—the short tale of those years she wretchedly drags out till the hand of death relieves her,—

this is the history—read, thou abandoned ruffian, and tremble!

Nor canst thou say that the picture is over-drawn. Go—contemplate the streets of London, when the sun has deserted this hemisphere—mark the thousands that throng them, the multitudes of polluted women that affect joy, while the cankering worm of woe is in their hearts, and while their thoughts do but ill accord with the gaudiness of their dress, or the voluptuous language of their tongue. Then see others of a more degraded stamp still—half naked, shivering in the cold, expelled from a wretched lodging by a ruthless landlady,—abroad in the world without friends or assistance,—Oh! gaze on all this—and do not dare affirm that we have misrepresented the state of those unfortunate creatures!

But to continue.

On the following day Arnold presented himself as usual at Mrs. Otway's house, and was greeted by Emily with smiles.

Mr. Hunter was also there. Of course he noticed the happiness which the two lovers enjoyed in each other's presence—but his heart sickened within him.

Arnold was not a little delighted to perceive that Emily had recovered herself so far as to conceal any sudden emotion which might have occasionally agitated her breast. They managed to escape to the garden, leaving Mrs. Otway and Hunter together in the drawing-room. They seated themselves in the summer-house, and commenced a serious conversation; for Emily was earnest in supplicating Arnold to hasten without delay to her mother, and request her hand in marriage. She declared that she was confident Mrs. Crawford, so far from hesitating, would gladly accept his offer: and he affirmed his intention of speedily repairing to Bagshot for that purpose.

"Yes," said Emily, "because my whole life is wrapped up in you; my existence depends on the way you requite my love! And remember, Arnold, that I was pure and innocent till you came; you have plucked a flower that bloomed without a fault—therefore must you ever wear it next your heart: for if you were to deceive me—"

"Deceive you, dearest—how can you utter such a word?" interrupted the hypocrite. "Till the cold hand of death, Emily, plant its mark upon my brow, shall I ever consult your felicity. Kiss me, dear one—and consider it to be the bond that links our hearts together at this moment and for ever!"

"I can—I must believe you—you have me in your power. In your presence must I always blush, if you make me not your wife. Oh! thou could'st not deceive me!"

"Emily, you ought to be aware that I would not! Do you doubt me?"

"No, Arnold," returned the poor girl; "but you do not know how happy I should be, if you would once more take all you hold sacred to testify that I shall be your lawful wife. I am so already, you said, in the sight of heaven: then swear by heaven that you will make me so in the sight of men!"

And as she uttered these affecting words, the beautiful girl gazed so fondly on the deceiver's countenance, that the glance she gave ought to have thawed the icy indifference of his heart, and rendered it capable of doing a deed of justice as well as of mercy.

But he replied still with the language of falsehood.

"I do swear—I do, my dearest Emily," said he. "May God—may all I reverence in those worlds invisible, of which the religionist writes, hear my vow, and consecrate it. Are you pleased now?"

"Yes—you have no idea, Arnold, how much happier I feel. Oh! that was a dreadful night—last night! At one time I lay weeping on my pillow to think that I was ruined—at another I was glad of what had occurred, because I hoped it would prevent any postponement of our union. Then I thought of my mother—my poor mother—my dear affectionate parent, who—if she knew my crime—my disgrace, Arnold—"

"Call it not so: how is that a crime which injures none? It cannot be, since our marriage will wipe away all reproach, and not a soul in the wide world can ever penetrate our secret."

"Oh! then I will not repine:—but you love me, do you not? are you very sure that you love me?" enquired Emily tenderly.

"Emily—you have heard that young Hunter give a touching picture of his love:—mine then is a thousand times more firmly—more deeply rooted."

"And of course you could not wound the feelings of her you adore so much?"

"Impossible, my dear girl! But wherefore these queries?"

"Only to persuade myself that you do not intend to deceive me; and that you will not triumph over your poor confiding Emily!"

"Hush!—depend upon me—look to the fulfilment of my promise as a thing indubitably fixed," said Arnold, deliberately affirming that which for many reasons he never meant, and indeed could not possibly perform.

"With that I must rest satisfied," returned the too confiding girl. "Now let us rejoice my aunt: we have been long enough absent—not too long for me—but sufficiently so to excite her suspicions."

They accordingly left the garden, entered the house, and found that Hunter had departed.

Mrs. Otway—experienced though she was in the ways of the world—did not suspect that anything wrong was going on between her niece and Arnold. She had always been led to consider him as the friend and benefactor of the Crawford family, and of course supposed that he must be upon terms of the utmost intimacy with every member of it, more as a father or uncle than in any other quality. This was greatly in favour of poor Emily; for the quick glance of one, who might have been suspicious as to the real light in which Arnold stood with regard to her, would speedily have detected her secret.

On Arnold's return to the inn, a letter was put into his hands. He knew the writing, and hastily opened it. It had been directed to him first at his hotel in London: then, in consequence of the orders he left there on his departure to Southampton, it was re-directed to the inn where he was living at this town. The contents not only astonished but also seriously alarmed him; and he was resolved to hasten to London immediately.

He hurried once more to Mrs. Otway's house, and told Emily that he felt uneasy till he had spoken to her mother on the subject of their marriage. She was of course delighted to hear this news; and tears of joy fell over her blushing

cheeks, like dew glittering on the budding rose of red. He gave her the address of his hotel in London, promised to write as speedily as possible, took an affectionate farewell of the beautiful creature he now intended to abandon for ever, and was soon on his way to the metropolis.

CHAPTER X.

Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness,
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
SHAKESPEARE.

ABOUT three weeks had elapsed since Arnold parted with Crawford and Rivingstone; he therefore felt anxious to know how the plans were proceeding. He arrived late in the evening at the hotel he usually frequented, and ordered some refreshment in the coffee-room. On entering that apartment he saw a knot of half a dozen individuals conversing seriously together at a table. Their knowing shrugs, shrewd looks, and solemn tones attracted his attention: he accordingly placed himself at a table near enough to hear their apparently interesting discourse.

"It is most extraordinary," said one. "Such a fortune could command palaces of marble, and dishes of gold in the kitchen, roasting spits set with pearls, and a jack whose wheel turned on a diamond."

"What a pity that it should have fallen into the hands of an old fool, as they say he is," remarked another. "How closely too he has hitherto kept his secret! I dare say that if he had never known that young Crawly—Crawford, or whatever his name may be, no one would have been a bit the wiser as to his hoarded riches, than the world was a month ago."

"Some men are born to be lucky," cried a third person: "this boy is the only son of a widow near Bagshot, or Staines, living in a poor cottage, in an out-of-the-way kind of place. And yet he may probably succeed to all this property—after his mother has so long subsisted, as I have been told by good authority, on the bounty of Sir George Mornay, who is——"

"Hush! hush!" interrupted another, pointing to Arnold, and whispering—most likely to make him recollect that a stranger was present, and that he must be cautious how he uttered anything detrimental to the character of the baronet alluded to.

"Oh! indeed!" continued the incautious individual, who had thus received a timely hint, it seemed. "But as I was saying, some are born to be lucky."

"And how parsimoniously the rich old fellow lives too," said another individual, alluding to the former part of their conversation's topic; "no carriage—no servants of his own—and reading his bill carefully over every morning. Yet he has done some charitable deeds: an execution for a hundred pounds was put into a poor wretch's house at Cheltenham; he heard of it, went at night time and paid it; he then sneaked away from having performed a good action, like a boy from an orchard that he has just plundered."

"A broiled fowl, a bottle of claret—and a fig for the old man, his twelve or fourteen millions, the boy Crawberry, and all!" exclaimed a fat little fellow with a nose on which divers carbuncles were tastefully studded, in order to exemplify the owner's love of good Port. "Who will join me?"

"Ah! parson," returned his neighbour, "you always think of the good things of this life: a broiled fowl is certainly no bad dish with mushroom sauce, and flanked by a bottle of the best Lafitte."

Arnold had now finished his repast; and seeing that no farther information was to be had from the party in the coffee-room of the — hotel, he was determined to retire to bed, and transact next day that business which had brought him so abruptly to town, from the charming presence and luxurious embraces of the deluded girl he had deliberately ruined.

When the light was extinguished, sleep lulled him not to rest; his spirits were too high to allow the enjoyment of immediate slumber. Oh! what raptures had filled his heart when he listened to the conversation of the people below. It was evident that the most enormous falsehood man ever had the impudence to utter, was credited by all who had yet heard it.

It was moreover evident, from what he had heard in the coffee-room, that by this time the report had made its way all over London, and was greedily swallowed by credulity. He pictured to himself the avaricious money-lenders that would flock around Crawford, on his arrival in London—the obsequious tradesmen that would actually force their goods upon him—the accommodating banker that would advance a sum upon his promissory note—the duped heiresses, anxious to join their fortunes with his enormous one—and, in fine, the admiring and credulous individuals ready to overload him with presents, or articles upon credit almost without being asked, in order to win his notice, and secure his favour. He thought of the vast sums of actual money thus to be amassed; and then, while he himself was passive the whole time, the best part of the scheme's products would be for him—lastly, when the discovery, which must come sooner or later, should be made, he could not be impeached as an accomplice. No—no: he would take good care of that! He would, in fine, be the only one really well off eventually!

Such were the reflections which kept him awake till an early hour in the morning, when slumber cut short his meditations.

He arose late to his breakfast, and afterwards set off to Newgate.

On his arrival at the prison he was speedily admitted, and shown into the cell where his friend Rivingstone was domiciliated—for it was no other than this worthy gentleman who had attempted to rob Captain Stewart, and who was the writer of the letter Arnold received at Southampton. The prisoner was delighted to see his friend, and enquired how the grand plot went on, although the probability was that he would not live to profit by its fruits. In fact he seemed perfectly indifferent as to his approaching fate—we say *fate*, because at that time his crime was one involving a capital penalty.

"Well, I am in the Stone Jug at last," exclaimed Rivingstone, when he and Arnold were seated on two miserable chairs beside as wretched a table.

"Tis unfortunate, very unfortunate, my friend I read in the newspaper that Captain Stewart had again been attacked, and that he had captured the thief; but how great was my astonishment on receiving your letter."

"And what do you suppose will be my fate?—I must tell you," continued Rivingstone, "that when new prisoners arrive here, a judge and jury are appointed by the oldest inmates: and thus, with all the solemnity in the world, they tried me the day I was sent to Newgate. I have been assured that instances have rarely occurred where this mock tribunal has erred in its decision. I was cast by them for death: the gallows, then," added he coolly, "must be my inevitable fate!"

"And what the devil is that?" said another prisoner, who in passing had caught the last words of Rivingstone. "I am as certain of being scragged as you are, my cove," continued he, stopping a moment; "cause why? I and some other rollooming cracksmen broke into a swell's crib,* merely to do a gentel panna; † when the varmint made show for malling, and we were obligated against our will to slit his windpipe into a small butten-hole—that's all, I assure you. The beaks got scent of it; and we were trapped, afore we could make ourselves sufficiently scarce, as tight as winkey. Three prigs beside me, now in the Jug, were my pals; and we shall all dance upon nothing to amuse the people assembled."

With these words he walked away humming a tune.

"Be not down-hearted, however, my dear fellow," cried Arnold. "Bear your misfortunes like a man."

"I do, indeed," rejoined Rivingstone. "But I was thinking whether Sir George Mornay may have any interest in James Crawford's succession to his title—for estates there are none."

"Why—wherefore this question?" exclaimed Arnold hastily, as he drew close to his companion.

"Because I have the means in my power to prevent or ensure that succession. Now that I am here, it matters not. If I am to die, to keep the secret were useless; if I live, the rest of my existence must be passed in other climes."

"Explain yourself—what is the meaning of all this?" demanded Arnold, remarkably excited.

"Nothing more nor less than—"

"Than what?"

"Than that I am the Westcott of whom you must have doubtless heard!"

"Gracious heavens!" cried Arnold in astonishment.

"Nay—the very same: I do not wonder that you are surprised."

"How! you the individual who cut the page out of the register, by which young Crawford was—"

"Yes—and when I came to examine it, I found it contained Mrs. Crawford's marriage. I was sorry—but knew not what course to pursue, and ever since have thought or cared little about it. I tore out the whole leaf for a person who bribed me well, and who had some interest in destroying the traces of another entry that happened to be made on that same leaf. I was found out; and sent to prison on a remand."

"And you escaped from prison?" said Arnold interrogatively.

"Well—then you may conceive my astonishment when I was first introduced by you to that very James—the boy I had prevented—"

"True—and now I recollect the false information you gave him on the night we eased Captain

* Broke into a gentleman's house. † To commit a gentel burglary.

Stewart of his loose cash, while we were walking from Kensington. But have you the paper with you?"

"I have kept it ever since, and now have it in my pocket-book," returned Rivingstone. "Some fatality has always hindered me from destroying it; but now it may be useful. Probably Sir George Mornay would interest himself for me, to obtain a commutation of my sentence, when it is passed, if I surrender the certificate to his discretion. Either he would be willing that young James Crawford should succeed him, or that he should not: there is no other alternative, since he cannot feel indifferent in the matter. The thing is perfectly clear: if the former, then he will be rejoiced to discover the necessary document; if the latter, he will be equally happy to destroy it."

"Your reasoning is correct," said Arnold. "I will hasten this instant to the baronet, should he be in town, and make some arrangement. Your trial will come on speedily; he shall use his influence after your sentence is pronounced."

"Lose no time—for at least your reply will ease me of the little suspense I feel. The moment he either calls here, or sends his solemn word of honour in writing, as a gentleman, to stand by his agreement, the paper shall be delivered up."

"You may expect me back as soon as possible;" and with these words Arnold departed—but not to Portland Place.

He had private reasons of his own for desiring to possess the certificate in question; and he strolled leisurely into a coffee-house hard by, and amused himself with the newspapers for a couple of hours.

Now, although Rivingstone—for so we shall continue to call him—was a man of uncommon firmness, and almost totally indifferent to any fate that might await him—still when a ray of hope gleamed in upon him, even through the iron bars of a gaol, he of course felt some anxiety until he could be satisfied as to the result. It was therefore with a fluttering heart that he beheld the re-appearance of Arnold.

"I have been," said this individual, "to the West End, and luckily found Sir George Mornay at home. I stated all to him; and he is most anxious to have the certificate. But he declares that he cannot in such a case put his hand to paper—neither can he call here upon you, for obvious reasons. He will not, in fact, compromise his rank and character. I vainly remonstrated with him: all he said was to this purport—'I give my most solemn word of honour, as a gentleman, that I will perform my promise, and do all that is in my power to obtain a commutation of Westcott's sentence, whatever it may be.'"

"What course, then, do you advise?"

"Trust to his honour—to his generosity. You will gain nothing by a refusal—he is positive: you may succeed by agreeing to his terms,"—were the arguments used by the wily deceiver.

"I think so—take it:—" and Rivingstone accordingly gave the paper to Arnold; whose eyes sparkled with delight, as he folded it up, and placed it in his pocket-book.

"I shall bring you a favourable reply," said Arnold, once more leaving his friend, to take the certificate, as he declared, to Sir George Mornay; but nothing was farther from his intentions.

In fine, he returned with the pretended answer of the baronet, promising the utmost exertion of

his interest in Rivingstone's behalf. He then bade him farewell, leaving him buoyed up with baseless hopes and a confidence without real foundation.

In the course of the afternoon, Arnold sauntered leisurely up Bond-street. Entering a shop, he asked for some trifling article—a pair of gloves. While he was making his selection, he demanded with an air of indifference, "Whether there were any fresh tidings concerning the old man, whose property was so extensive?"

"We have heard, Sir," returned the obsequious shopkeeper, that he intends coming to London. I am sure I hope that the report is true—tradesmen must have custom, Sir—they must, I assure you, Sir—and the trade is bad, Sir, moreover.—Try this pair, Sir."

"It will do—look me out some more of the same size. But," continued Arnold, "do you really suppose this Mr.—Mr.—what's his name?"

"Fitzgerald, Sir—the youth is named Crawford, Sir—a relation to Sir George Mornay, Sir, I have heard—an excellent young man, Sir," was the reply.

"Well, then—this Mr. Fitzgerald—is he actually the master of—how much do they say?"

"At first we heard, Sir—exactly the size, you see, Sir—that he possessed property to the amount of ten millions—"

"Sterling money?"

"Oh! no, Sir—foreign property—he is the silent partner in many great houses at Lisbon, we believe, Sir. But there are various reports, Sir, as to the actual sum: for my part, I fancy it to be much more than any one imagines—some eighteen millions, I'll lay the best cachmere shawl in my shop to a common—yes, Sir, a very common pair of gloves."

"And when is the old gentleman expected?"

We must observe that Arnold, ever cautious as to his own safety, had forbidden Crawford and Dimmock, *alias* Fitzgerald, to write to either him or Rivingstone, except in case of the utmost need, alleging, for a reason, that accidents might happen with letters.

"To-morrow or the next day, Sir, I have understood; and the young gentleman who saved his life, is with him," was the reply given to his question.

"Indeed—how much for the gloves?"

"Six pairs, Sir—that will be eighteen shillings—thank you, Sir—hope you will remember my shop again—good morning, Sir:—and Arnold walked away.

We shall not fatigue our readers by relating the conversations he had with various people during the day, touching the scheme he had himself planned. Everybody told him a different tale: vague reports as to the amount of the fortune were only in reality abroad, though none admitted their ignorance of the real sum. And this very pride, in not wishing to know less than their neighbours, did the cause all the good in the world, and served more materially than any thing else to consecrate the imposture; because some, with an intelligent shrug of the shoulder, or shake of the head, would give others to understand that they knew from certain unquestionable authority, which they could not mention, that the property was not one farthing less than so-and-so; while another set pretended to have known for years that such wealth was actually possessed by one man.

Thus all London credited the tale: the ballad-singers, or ballad-vendors, cried pamphlets for sale, pretending to contain narratives of the rich Mr. Fitzgerald's character, birth, profession, education, and manners. Some declared he was a Scotchman, and had made his money as a merchant in Edinburgh—others said he had sold potatoes forty years ago in Dublin—one affirmed his having lived as a rag-merchant half a century back, when he was very young, in the purlieus of Saffron-Hill—but all agreed that for a long while he had been abroad amassing the mighty treasures which Croesus might have envied.

Clever men shook their heads, fearing those treasures were not honestly acquired, and even venturing to hint that English banditti had lately infested many places on the Continent, particularly in Italy; the poor and ignorant swore he had dealings with the devil, and had been studying the black arts in the forests of Germany; moderate men, neither very wise nor very silly, very rich nor very indigent, only tried to look knowing, and averred that the whole wealth was acquired by honest industry and successful trade over the world.

Then arose debates concerning the locality and nature of the property. One affirmed it to consist of investments in various foreign funds, under different names; others supposed it to be extensive interests in numerous large merchants' houses in every part of the Continent where commerce most flourishes:—in fine, no two individuals agreed where to fix it.

Arnold was almost mad with delight: he saw that the world was most egregiously duped,—that men's minds had readily swallowed the falsehood—and that great advantages would be the result.

CHAPTER XI.

Onfem'd that traitor vile the letter redd
 Hyt rode unturnd, ne sorrow yn his e'on;
 Wythouten blush upon his featurs pyrodd
 He saw the saddest paper that hath been—
 He chafed not his yronn harie, I ween,
 He drapt no chrystall on the scyle wit page,
 But ever kept that recklessness of mein,
 That ne'er suspition's glance could y-engage,
 Nor make mistrust the heafodd of experienc'd age!

Old Poem.

On the following morning the ensuing letters were found upon the table of Arnold's private sitting room, when he descended from his bed-chamber to breakfast.

The first was from Emily, and ran thus:

"MY DEAREST STANLEY,

"Southampton.

"I have taken advantage of the address you left with me, to write a line, for two reasons: the first is, that I feel my mind will be relieved by discussing even on paper with him I love; the second, that there are strange reports current in Southampton concerning my brother. We have heard that there is an individual, at present residing in Cheltenham, named Fitzgerald, whose life has been saved by a Mr. Crawford, to whom he has in consequence taken a great liking; and, as his fortune is said to be as great as the interest of the national debt—this is what Mr. Hunter has just informed us—"if that Crawford really were our James, I thought at first, what a happy event for our family will it probably be!"

"Then I wondered how James, whom I supposed to be residing at your house in London, could be at Cheltenham; but the newspaper came in, and proved beyond a doubt that it was my own brother, because it gave a slight sketch of our family, &c; and our situation with regard to Sir George.

Mornay, whom it justly calls 'a time-serving man, without any visible means of supporting the scanty style he does manage to keep up in Portland-place,—an individual whose character is not the most free in the world from stain and who must supply by gambling, or other vicious pursuits, the enormous breaches his extravagances have made in a fortune never considerable.'

"The paragraph then touched on the affairs of Mr. Fitzgerald, and at length concluded thus:—'We suppose that the haughty baronet who has so long barbarously refused to hold any communication with his poor relatives, will now change his mode of conduct, and be one of the first to take Mr. Crawford by the hand, since that youth's prospects, although uncertain, are even better than those of the actual heir to any property in England. Should Sir George Mornay act in this manner, we hope the spirited son of his deceased cousin will reject with scorn the overtures of an individual whose advances of friendship are merely the false coins with which he endeavours to cheat his credulous neighbour.' Why the journal is so bitter against the baronet, I cannot say.

"And now let me ask you how you succeeded with my mother? Write if you cannot come immediately, for God's sake, and relieve my anxiety. Oh! Stanley, if you love me—if you have any feeling for her, who fondly, too fondly, perhaps, confided in you, and on your honour—if you regard these solemn vows which you pledged in the sight of Heaven's awful majesty ere you left me at Southampton,—do not trifle with me—but either make me your wife, or seal my doom at once by a refusal! Suspense is still more agonizing than actual knowledge of the worst.

"Mr. Hunter said to me this morning, 'Miss Crawford, I am afraid you are unwell'—for he is a surgeon, you know. I replied that I was quite well.—'How is it, then,' continued he, 'that you turn pale, and red sometimes in the same moment?'—I was obliged to deceive him, Stanley—Oh! how I hate a falsehood! I told him I was thinking of my brother's happy prospects. He gave me one of his bitter smiles, remarked that certain individuals were born to be fortunate, and retired.

"I only mention this to show you that I really cannot well play the hypocrite so deeply as to disguise incessantly the real state of my feelings: but while I am engaged in writing this tedious epistle, you may haply be upon the way to espouse my Emily. You say you love me; then you, by knowing what affection is, can allow for my anxiety either to see or hear from you. Only one look from your eyes—one kiss from your lips—one pressure of your hand—one word from your pen to say you still love, and will not deceive me.—Oh! these will give relief!

"When I used to read in romances at home, before I knew you, Stanley, of people almost dying for love—and when I think of poor Hunter,—my tears did, and do flow, over the pages that told the history of faithful maidens' woes, or when I listen to his words of grief. Some, however, received consolation by being enabled to pour out to the sympathy of a friend the narrative of their sorrows. Whom here can I make a confidant of? my aunt would scold me, would probably chide my foolish passion, as she would call it, and send me home to my mother: and yet not to have a single being to converse with about you, Arnold—not to be ever dwelling on your excellencies, and your virtues.—Oh! to retain it all in this poor heart of mine, is to choke—to suffocate the best feelings of life. I retire to my chamber to weep—and cannot, although it would relieve me: then, when I would wish to hide my tears, they flow copiously, and I do not experience comfort. And what deceitful stories, Stanley, am I obliged to tell my aunt, when she sees me drop those tears! But I will fatigue you no longer. Either write or come directly, and make happy or miserable for life your eternally devoted

"EMILY CRAWFORD."

To this affecting epistle, which rather perplexed the hypocrite whose imaginary virtues and excellencies had just been eulogized by the very being he had ruined, Arnold, after some consideration, returned the following answer, purposely introducing delicate allusions to her seduction, that she might be thus restrained from making their correspondence the subject of any confidence she would otherwise perhaps be innocently led to place in another individual:—

"DEAREST EMILY,

Your letter has much grieved me, because it seems to

"— Hotel, London.

say that you are unhappy:—this must naturally annoy him who adores you. I saw your mother on my way hither, and have not yet received her definitive answer. I expect it daily; and on obtaining it, shall hasten immediately to Southampton to fetch away my lovely bride. Be not alarmed, dear girl; but put the utmost reliance on the performance of my promise. If a short time, however, should intervene between this and the period when our union shall take place, endeavour to pass the remaining interval tranquilly. Should, on the other hand, any disagreeable result ensue from the thrilling moments of happiness we enjoyed together in the delicious summer-house, when I and my lovely Emily tasted the bliss of a sincere passion in each other's arms, then we must be immediately married, with or without your mother's consent.

"Take care, Emily, of that Mr. Hunter: I do not like him particularly well; his misfortunes have made him so selfish, that I even imagine he would rejoice in a fellow-creature's unhappiness, thereby receiving comfort from the knowledge that others are often as wretched as himself. If he endeavours to obtain your confidence, steadfastly divert him from his purpose: and Oh! Emily, you must—you ought—you will conceal your emotions, for me (which appeal I am aware is a matter of some consideration with you), for your family, for yourself, and for your honour!

"Now to speak upon other matters. I have also seen the journal you allude to, and whence you copied the paragraphs relative to Sir George Mornay, &c. He must be dreadfully annoyed; but he deserves, I daresay, all the opprobrium that can be heaped upon his name. How it came to pass that your brother is at Cheltenham was as follows: When I was at Southampton he became a little tired of London, without me, and took a trip thither. In the same hotel where he stopped by accident, resided temporarily this old miserly Fitzgerald, of whom the world is now so busily talking. A fire broke out in his room during the night: James was the first to become aware of it, from the vicinity of their chambers; he rushed into the apartment, and found the poor old fellow fast asleep. When he shook him hastily, Fitzgerald, almost died of fright, and was almost as helpless from actual alarm as an infant child: so that James was obliged to carry him out to another room. He then made a second visit to the burning chamber; and, with others, who came, he succeeded in extinguishing the fire, thus saving many valuable papers, and other articles belonging to the wealthy miser. This has made a deep impression on the old man's mind in favour of your brother; and he has insisted that James shall stay there with him. He has given him a few presents—not very handsome however; for the old miser is excessively parsimonious.

"I am now about to set off and see your mother. Do not in your letters say one word relative to our mutual love, or my visits to Southampton: I have my private reasons; and I know that my dearest Emily will ever put the utmost confidence in the love and sincerity of her affectionate

"STANLEY ARNOLD."

Such was the epistle poor Emily was to be duped by.

The object of Arnold in hinting to her that some time might peradventure elapse ere their nuptials could be celebrated, was that he might gradually, by various excuses, delays, &c. so attune the mind of the unfortunate girl, that at last she would be able to support less despairingly the fatal disclosure which must eventually be made—that he could not make her his wife. Of course his motives are but too obvious to the reader, when he pretended to have seen her mother, and when he advised her not to think of making any confession to her parent of the love that existed between them.

The other letter which Arnold received on morning mentioned at the opening of this chapter, was from Mrs. Crawford, and ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR MR. ARNOLD,

"We are much surprised to learn to-day from Captain Stewart, a gentleman with whom we have lately become acquainted, that James is at Cheltenham with a rich old man whose life he has accidentally been the means of saving during a fire. Captain Stewart then told us many marvellous stories he had heard regarding this Mr. Fitzgerald's wealth, expressing his opinion that James would



eventually be the heir to an enormous fortune. While he was yet speaking, a letter from James himself luckily arrived, corroborating all that was narrated to us, and alleging various reasons for not having written before to tell us he had gone to Cheltenham by your consent for a few days; and there the fortunate event of rescuing Mr. Fitzgerald from the flames has secured a friendship likely to be happy in its results.

"I should observe that Captain Stewart is a very good young man, about five-and-twenty, and pays Catherine great attention. I should not allow his frequent visits, were he not an officer of the strictest honour, possessing a handsome property, highly connected, besides being respected in his regiment by all who know him. He is the same who was plundered some time ago near Hounslow: you may have seen an account of the infamous deed in the papers.

"Amongst other things in the journal he brought us to-day, there was a great deal prejudicial to the character of Sir George Mornay.

"Believe me to remain

"Your ever obliged,

"AMELIA CRAWFORD."

To this letter, written by a confiding parent to one whom she considered her faithful friend, a subtle answer, suited to his purposes, was returned; but it is useless to detail its contents. Let us see how that which was sent to Emily, was received by the deluded girl.

It is however difficult to describe the exact state of her feelings, after she had read that letter; because mingled joy and sorrow agitated her bosom. She felt delighted that Arnold had spoken to her mother—for of course she believed that he had:—then she grieved that Mrs. Crawford had occasioned the delay to which her lover alluded. She thought Arnold's letter was kind, to the utmost; but she fancied he wrote loosely and lightly of those tender embraces and amorous dalliances in the garden of Mrs. Otway's house, where Virtue fled before the puissance of heated passion!

She nevertheless derived consolation from those parts where he fondly appeared to encourage her to put implicit confidence in his integrity and honourable designs, and where he declared his ardent affection.

Long—long did she ponder on the rapturous theme—long, long did she press the paper to her heaving bosom, while frequent were the sighs that agitated those glowing globes—sighs of delight, of anxiety, of unutterable feeling! She was more comforted than when she wrote her letter to Arnold; and her countenance was even radiant as she sought her aunt in the drawing-room. She was not however there; but Mr. Hunter was shortly afterwards announced.

"You have been unwell lately, Miss Crawford," said he; "but to-day you appear better."

"Oh! indeed, Mr. Hunter, I assure you I have not been unwell: I actually begin to imagine that you surgeons pretend to detect ailments where none exist."

"No—no, Miss Crawford, I am not to be deceived," continued the young man with emphasis. "Were it from a mercenary view that I had offered my advice, you would then have had good cause to affirm what you did: but, Emily—I beg pardon, Miss Crawford—I saw plainly that either the mind or the body was affected; and I was not mistaken! Deem me not impertinent; curiosity does not influence my sentiments. But it is that I cannot—I could not see a young, beautiful, and interesting creature—this is not flattery—the victim of loathed melancholy. I know what that melancholy—that incessant sorrow is; this heart of mine is the tenement of grief—God grant your's may never be!"

"I thank you—thank you most sincerely," said Miss Crawford, evidently affected; "I am grateful for the kind interest—"

"Interest! When I look at myself, Emily, and see the wretched wreck I have so lately become—when I tell you that I am the victim of a disappointed passion, of a secret flame slowly burning at my heart's core—you must suppose that I should feel hurt to see one, who could not support so overwhelming a load of grief, become its victim. You love, Emily—think me not encroaching! on the thoughts of your heart:—but Mr. Arnold has gained your love! May you be happy—may you be prosperous! He seems one well calculated to promote your felicity—while I am still—still wretched!"

"Oh! Mr. Hunter," cried Emily,—"what—how—who told you that Mr. Arnold was attached to me—that he—in fine, that he had the slightest affection for me?" continued the poor girl, recovering her presence of mind, which she had partially lost when Hunter began to touch on the tender subject.

"I have seen it, Emily," returned the young man, feeling himself intimate, from their peculiarity of situation, with the beautiful being near him; "I have noticed your interchange of fond glances—your smothered sighs, when Mr. Arnold was here: I detected instantly when he arrived, the object of your love; and I had already known a long while that your heart was another's. For when you were on a visit at Southampton last summer, in this very room, and at other places, whenever the conversation touched on the topic of love, your young heart beat quickly—your colour went and came—in fine I found that you

were attached to some one—yes, and deeply attached.—Now you may think me prying and impertinent: but I am not so. Reasons influenced—"

"At all events your perceptive powers are great," murmured Emily, scarcely knowing what she said, and blushing deeply.

"Alas!—But can you forgive me, Emily, that I have used such freedom with you—that I have dared to consider myself your brother for a little space—that I have ventured even to hope you will allow me to stand in the light of a friend towards you, till this hand shall be mouldering in the dust—till this aching heart shall have ceased to burn—and till this forehead," continued he, striking his brow violently, "shall no more during the hours of night send forth cold, clammy drops of agony! Till then let me be your friend. But now we will say no more:—perhaps I have already said too much. Adieu, my dear Miss Crawford, for the present!"

And Hunter departed hurriedly.

This scene plunged Emily into deep thoughtfulness.

"If," she pondered, "he so easily detected mine innocent love, when it began, how readily will he discover, by the slightest inadvertency on my part, the fault it has led me to! But no—on the other hand, any emotion of mine will be construed by him as the effect of that love, and not as a proof of an internal sense of guilt."

The entrance of Mrs. Otway put an end to this reverie; and they sat down to converse together on indifferent topics.

CHAPTER XII.

How sweet a maiden's and a youth's first love—
The pure first love of each!

Ancient Poem.

BUT in the meantime what occupied the lovely and innocent Catherine? She was walking in the garden of the neat little cottage with Captain Stewart, gazing sometimes on her favourite flowers (which had been rather neglected lately), though more frequently engaged in attentively listening to the discourse of her companion. They at length returned to the house, and sat down with Mrs. Crawford to an early dinner, so as to allow a long evening before he was obliged to return to Hounslow. After this repast the conversation turned upon a variety of topics, which it is scarcely worth while to particularise. At length Captain Stewart, after glancing around the room, exclaimed, "And now my dear madam, I hope you will permit me to solicit one favour of you daughter."

"What is that, sir?" enquired Catherine herself, modestly.

"Cannot you guess?—there is a harp in the corner of the room," returned the officer smiling: "will you allow me to place it near you? Need I say any more, Miss Crawford?"

"Indeed, Captain Stewart—"

"Oh! I know your pretty oath by yea and nay, as Walter Scott says of Lady Heron: but I really expect you will favour me now with that sweet ballad you began the other day."

"With pleasure, if it must be so;"—and Catherine accordingly took her seat at the harp which Stewart placed near her; and after passing her fingers once or twice over the strings, she

commenced in a melodious voice the following words :—

A BALLAD.

I bade her adieu, and I bade her farewell,
And I kissed her paly cheek ;
Oh ! quick on my bosom her salt tears fell,
And though she had many fond things to tell,
In vain she essayed to speak.

Her languishing eye was more sad, and her brow
Grew pale, if it paler could be ;
Methinks that I see her so delicate now,
With her cheeks all as pallid and bloodless as snow—
She ne'er was more lovely to me.

Her hair was dishevell'd, and beautifully fell
On a neck of the marble hue ;
Her eyes, that grew dim as I bade her farewell,
And did even unfold what the lips could not tell,
Were a dark celestial blue.

I left her so lovely, so sad, and still weeping—
From the dear one I tore away ;
Her grief had awoke that had long been sleeping—
And the tears those heav'nly orbs were steeping.
For this was the parting day !

I left her a year with the army to roam ;
But when the time had past,
I hastily turn'd to seek mine home,
And my horse, as I journey'd, was white with foam :
'Twas Love that urg'd so fast.

I anxiously enter'd the halls of my sire,
Oh God !—I discovered her doom ;
For the roof was all burnt by the enemy's fire,
And the splendid floors were her funeral pyre,
And the flames had wav'd over her tomb !

I enter'd—alas ! the ravager's hand
Had done the work of death !
Now I was all lonely in the land—
And I left it, with tears, for a foreign strand,
To waste out my lingering breath.

Despair is sad with a hectic cheek,
And is sad with a downcast eye ;
But the hand may trace what the lips cannot speak,
And the heart, though breaking, is never so weak
That it cannot respond a sigh !

As the last notes of this ballad died away upon the tongue of the beautiful Catherine, Captain Stewart's raptures could be contained no longer. He was ardent in his praises—Catherine coloured at the vehemence of his repeated compliments, while her mother's experienced eye detected in his language, in his manner, and in his looks, all the warmth of a deeply-rooted affection or her daughter.

The more he gazed on the fair girl before him, the more he wished to call her by the endearing name of wife : but he was determined to act according to his father's wishes as far as he was able, without doing material violence to his own feelings, and at all events consult that parent before he made any rash engagement which he would be afterwards sorry to perform.

And this he resolved should be done speedily. His honourable disposition told him that he had no right to trifle with the heart of a young and innocent girl : he doated on her sincerely and therefore wished to keep her in suspense no longer. He accordingly resolved to reveal his love to Catherine on the following morning, short as had been the period of their acquaintance : and then, when referred to the mother, as he supposed of course he should be, to state his exact position, as he stood regarding his father Lord Fanmore.

Noblemen are oftentimes very chary of allowing their sons to unite themselves to any thing save the daughters of aristocratic blood, or those possessing a well-lined purse. This is execrable nonsense, because neither noble birth nor immense

wealth can command felicity. There is many a cot, where poverty is no unfrequent guest, in which dwell beings far more happy than the princely paladin in his marble halls and carpeted saloons, replete with the costliest ornaments ; though their master may boast himself descended in a right line from Julius Cæsar.

The evening glided away : Stewart once more withdrew in regret, and rode back to Hounslow. But the following morning he was at the cottage by rather an early hour. It had not been his habit to call two days consecutively : notwithstanding which, he was cordially received as usual. Mrs. Crawford probably divined the object of his visit, judging from the ardent symptoms he had given of his love on the previous evening. He was less gay than ordinarily ; his cheek was slightly pale, and his manners a little embarrassed. The day was fine ; and he accordingly proposed to Catherine a stroll in the garden, to visit the flowers which had lately been rather neglected. She consented, hastily threw on her straw bonnet, and accompanied the officer down stairs. At first he spoke but few words, and appeared thoughtful : then he gradually drew the conversation round to his own affairs, and lamented the pride of his father, which, he said, prevented him in many cases from acting for himself.

"I do not call that pride," returned the amiable girl ; "I should rather deem it to be affectionate solicitude for his son's welfare and happiness."

"No—Miss Crawford : in the most important event that can take place in a man's life, I am afraid that the foolish sentiment of pride which he cherishes, will make me excessively miserable."

"How, sir ?" inquired Catherine.

"The choice of a wife, I mean," returned Stewart, gazing on his companion's countenance, while she blushed slightly, although ignorant wherefore. "Yes," proceeded he, "dear Catherine," as they seated themselves on a bench together near the garden gate—how her heart beat when he uttered those fond words !—"I must now tell you that your beauty, your innocence, your virtues, have made the deepest impression on my heart. Listen, dear girl, I beseech you—tell me whether I am indifferent to you—whether you love another more fortunate than I—whether my addresses—"

"O ! leave me, sir—do leave me, I beseech you," exclaimed she, almost overpowered by the sudden disclosure of Stewart's passion.

"No, dearest Catherine ; because a moment's consideration will enable you to collect your thoughts. I mean to speak presently to your mother, if you tell me that I am not disliked by you—that—"

"I scarcely know how to reply, sir," returned Catherine, while her heart was replete with a variety of emotions.

"Sweet girl, I love—I adore you : can you love me ? could you be united to me in matrimony's sacred bonds ? or do you love another ?" cried Stewart with impassioned emphasis of expression.

"No, sir—I love none but my relations!" was the innocent reply.

"This is a different species, another kind of love—a something that would induce you to leave those relations to live for the rest of your earthly existence with a being on whom you set your affections!" exclaimed Stewart.

"Indeed you have questioned—you have perplexed—you have told me so very much, and all so very suddenly, that I must speak to my mother before I reply. I am not angry with you, Captain Stewart," continued the amiable girl; "for something tells me that you have said nothing wrong: and I begin to think there are numberless things in life which have been hidden from my knowledge. But be assured that I am not discontented with what you have said. It is true, I do not exactly understand all: yet again I repeat that I am convinced you have uttered nothing improper; although," she added, as an idea flashed across her, "it would be unbecoming in me to listen longer, without telling my mother. I must go now; and believe me when I say I am not vexed with you,—not in the least!"

With these words she rose and ran into the house.

Now a young Miss, just let loose from a boarding-school, would have readily found other terms wherein to express herself, when replying to a handsome suitor like the cavalry officer: but Catherine had been brought up at home under the eye of her mother, and was therefore as innocent of those affairs as the child of three years old. Thus, if anything could possibly interest Stewart still more in this amiable and excellent girl—it was her present behaviour. He saw that she was attached to him—that her heart was really his—that she was not sorry for the disclosure he had made her: but he was delighted with the delicate manner in which she had listened to it. He compared her conduct with that which would have been the part of an initiated beauty in the gay circles of fashion; and the more he pondered, the deeper was his affection for Catherine Crawford.

Firmer than ever were now his resolves to secure to himself the possession of so virtuous and lovely a girl as the partner of his fortune and happiness: nor less did he determine to hasten to his father, to throw himself even upon his knees, and solicit his consent to that which if refused, would either make him act undutifully, or cause him much misery for the remainder of his existence.

Not five minutes did he remain in the garden to reflect on what course to pursue; but he turned once more to the cottage, and found Mrs. Crawford in the parlour, already acquainted by Catherine, who had retired to her own room, with the conversation that had taken place.

She received Captain Stewart with a smile, declared herself highly honoured by the preference he had shown her daughter over hundreds of high-born ladies with whom he must necessarily be acquainted from his social position; then she delighted his ears by affirming that she had closely questioned her daughter, and found their attachment to be reciprocal; but concluded by saying that she never could give her consent unless his father, Lord Fanmore, should consent also.

"Because," she remarked, "so much misfortune had happened in families, when connexions took place contrary to the wishes of a parent or interested relative, that she was resolved not to expose herself or her daughter to the probability of receiving a cool and haughty look from the friends of him who entered her family as the husband of Catherine." To these sound and just sentiments

Stewart replied by saying, that the very next day he intended to call upon his father in Jermyn Street—to represent all to him—and throw himself upon his mercy. Lord Fanmore was a kind, though a proud man; hence he did not despair of success.

CHAPTER XIII.

Oh! what authority, and show of truth,
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!

SHAKESPEARE.

It was early in the morning that Arnold was awakened from his sleep by the entrance of a waiter, who officiously came to inform him that the rich old Mr. Fitzgerald and Crawford were arrived in town, and had gone to Long's Hotel. He, notwithstanding, cursed the servant for arousing him, turned upon his side in bed, and pretended to settle himself again to slumber, as if reckless of the news which the poor domestic deemed so important; while that discomfited individual ran briskly down stairs, wondering how anybody could be indifferent to such a weighty event.

But in reality Arnold's heart beat with joy; and his eyes flashed with delight, as he pondered on the event. He, however, determined to keep away from Crawford in the day-time, for particular reasons of his own; and only to have a few minutes interview of an evening with him, when it could be arranged with proper security. This mode of conduct had already been agreed upon between them ere the scheme was put into execution: there was, consequently, no danger that James would imprudently seek him, or even recognize him familiarly, if they met in the street, before others.

Whatever were Arnold's reasons for such a method of behaviour, we cannot as yet divine. Crawford was never accustomed to question his resolutions, but immediately consented to act as he was desired; although it would certainly have appeared less selfish in Arnold, to have been near to assist him with his advice on all occasions, under the title of a friend to either himself or Fitzgerald.

Now, then, let us commence a detail of the incipient success which attended the plots of Arnold, by returning directly to young Crawford. He found himself at present in the first hotel the West End of the metropolis possessed,—about to prosecute an imposition which required the utmost ingenuity, tact, and circumspection to support. But the success he had already experienced at Cheltenham emboldened and enlivened him:—he felt himself capable of carrying on his part in the comedy; and his spirits rose when he reflected that the eyes of nearly all the nation would shortly be turned upon him and his companion; that he was now the subject of conversation and of discussion in the journals; that London had anxiously waited his arrival from motives of the most ardent curiosity, and that Cheltenham had echoed to his fame;—he thought of the celebrity he had, in company with Fitzgerald, or Dimmock, acquired as yet—then he contemplated, the renown which would attend him, blackened though it were, when the discovery of the cheat should be eventually made, and when those whom he duped should be vehement in their anathemas against him. Still he considered it to be an

Erostratian renown, that would be better than a mortal name unsullied. If now and then he bestowed a thought upon his poor mother, who had greedily drunk down the honied words of deception as well as the rest, it was soon chased away by the above sentiments.

Dimmock had played his part even better than Rivingstone himself had expected. He personated the wealthy and parsimonious man to perfection:—he was sparing in his words—plain in his apparel, and somewhat sulky in his manners to a stranger—thus preventing the approach of impertinent curiosity.

We may give a better idea of him, if we describe him at the period a hired post-chaise set him and Crawford down at Long's Hotel.

The busy waiters ran out; several loiterers gleaned who it was from the postillion, the moment the vehicle stopped: they told it to others passing; and ere the door was actually opened, a hundred individuals had collected at the entrance of the hotel, maintaining a respectful distance,—awed by the presence of one who possessed such treasures,—to see the mighty man. Crawford first stepped out of the chaise, to assist his companion to alight. Then with solemn air,—be silent, ye breezes!—stand backward, ye impertinent spectators!—sweep the dust from the street, and put a velvet carpet where he must tread!—for, as we said, with solemn looks, Mr. Fitzgerald descended slowly from the carriage, cast a single glance of indifference upon the crowd assembled, and paced leisurely into the hotel, where, bowing to the ground, accompanied by his myrmidons, the obsequious master was himself ready—yes, reader, himself!—a great honour rarely shown to any save titled men—to conduct him to a suite of rooms which royalty would not have been ashamed to grace.

Mr. Fitzgerald, as we shall call him for the present, was dressed in a snuff-coloured coat, carefully brushed, though purposely a little white at the elbows: the skirts of it were particularly square, possessing convenient pockets covered by large flaps, garnished with two or three buttons each. His breeches were formed of brown drab cloth, fastened with hooks and eyes at the knees, and supporting a pair of clean white hose; while shoes, as square at the toes as his coat-tails, and ornamented each by a large silver buckle, graced his feet. His waistcoat was buff, also containing very capacious pockets, in one of which was an antique ponderous gold snuff-box, and in the other a small morocco case filled with papers, which the crowd declared to be a quantity of foreign bonds for a million and a half of money at the least. From his fob hung a massive gold chain, at the end of which were some half dozen seals of extraordinary size; while two or three white pebbles, probably picked up on the seabeach, were seen suspended amongst them, called by the old man *tokens*—but of what he never said. Then his white cravat was carefully tied in a neat bow; and a large brooch was stuck in the frill of his shirt. A few thin grey hairs escaped from under a hat the height of which was a fourth of a foot, the breadth of whose brims was three inches at the least, and the diameter of the crown double as great as that of the part where his head fitted into this quaint beaver. The ribband round it was of a piece with the rest, being nearly as wide as that of a lady's bonnet, and set

tastefully off with a large silver buckle. His right hand held a thick cane, which was decorated by a morsel of dirty leather, run through a hole near the top, and intended to represent a tassel: and the handle was supposed by its owner to resemble an eagle's beak, though the real dimensions of it approximated much nearer the extension of the horn of a ram. He was probably five feet four inches high, emaciated in his appearance, and stooping in his gait; notwithstanding which, the imagined depth of his purse was like charity, or a good great-coat over a shabby suit of clothes, covering a multitude of sins. His conversation, when he did talk a little, was moreover far different from the coarse style that seemed to delight his wife, who was now comfortably vegetating near Bagshot, while, to use her own words, "her hold warminty wagabond of a 'usband was doing the nibsome, and coming the counterfeited crank hover the swell covies in Lunnun."

As may be supposed, the news of the mighty man's arrival were soon bruited abroad through the vast metropolis of England. Many a clerk that day managed to sneak off half an hour earlier than usual from out of his dusky office in the inns of court, to catch a glimpse, if possible, of the object of all curiosity. Many a young girl's heart fluttered anxiously that night at the theatres, expecting Crawford might be present, and desirous of attracting the notice of the probable heir to a princely fortune. But no one was gratified with a sight of those two wonderful beings, after their arrival, save the waiters of the hotel; and hundreds went away as disappointed as a poor poet from a nobleman's levee. This was purposely done. Fitzgerald and James kept closely to their dining-room, sipping a glass of generous wine after a magnificent dinner, and laughing heartily at the world they were deceiving. They prided themselves on the excellent manner in which the fire had been lighted at the hotel at Cheltenham—the assumed confusion of the old man—the daring efforts of Crawford—the thanks of the host for the salvation of his property—the generosity of Fitzgerald in insisting to pay for the injury sustained—and the plausible grounds afforded by all this for the commencement of an intimate acquaintance between him and the pretended saviour of his life,—an acquaintance which was to end in James's adoption, and his heritage of the vast property possessed by his patron. They planned various schemes for the future; and determined to remain at home the following day as well, to try the people's curiosity to the utmost, and see what would happen.

The next morning dawned; and the sun, when it arose, beamed upon a group of waiters at the door of Long's Hotel, busily employed in giving a description to two or three idlers of the rich Mr. Fitzgerald and James Crawford. As usual in these cases, the very idea of wishing to appear to know more than any body else, essentially benefited our two impostors. One of the servants declared that he peeped through the key-hole of the old gentleman's apartment, half an hour after he had retired on the previous evening, and saw the wealthy miser sitting by the table, counting the notes he carried in his pocket-book, casting fearful glances ever and anon round the room, and then safely depositing the precious store under the pillow, as additional security against those who might entertain an unholy affection for

the said pocket-book. The whole of this was entirely false, notwithstanding the greediness with which it was swallowed.

That day the coffee room of Long's hotel was filled with visitors, anxious to get a sight of the lion and cub. Indeed, many a wonderful animal, in the phraseology of the keeper, "kivered all over with spots, and no two alike," has remained months after importation to the Zoological Gardens without attracting the hundreds that now crowded to the hotel to witness a much less miraculous thing. Many a lovely actress's *debut* was not attended by those curious ones who at present thought it worth while to hasten to Long's to undergo the expense of paying for a dinner and a couple of bottles of wine, in order to have a peep at an old fellow, who, if he really possessed the reported wealth, could not possibly have been an object deserving such extraordinary attention.

Numbers of the fashionable young men about town were feasting that evening in the coffee-room, on the luxuries of the season. The Honourable Mr. A., the Marquis of D., the elegant Lord L., and the top Mr. S., accompanied by two or three others, were seated at one table, the cloth being withdrawn, discussing their claret, and chattering entirely on the matter that engrossed universal conversation! A horrible murder had been committed the night before; but no one cared one farthing about it—not a soul thought fit to allude to it—or, in other words, few even recollected it.

The whole and sole object and hope was to gain a view of the modern Croesus, and if possible, scrape acquaintance with the Fortunate Youth. But the old gentleman kept close to his room; and when those, who "dropped in to catch a glimpse of the miser," called for their bills, they found that the obsequious proprietor of Long's hotel had taken advantage of his increase of business to raise his prices so considerably, that, high as they were before, the original charge was a trifle to the present. Seventeen shillings for claret, fifteen for *champagne mousseux*, thirty a head for a dinner that formerly cost a guinea—and everything in proportion. One of the waiters refused three shillings and eleven-pence as a perquisite to himself, because it was not all in neat silver!

This, and several other instances of the same kind occurred: in fine the day passed amid the bustle and confusion of a crowd's curiosity, without a single individual's obtaining a view of Mr. Fitzgerald, save the people immediately belonging to the hotel.

CHAPTER XIV.

"To-morrow be it," Ezzelth replied,
 "And here our several worth and truth be tried;
 I gage my life, my falchion to attest
 My words, so may I mingle with the blest!"

Lara.

THAT evening Lord Fanmore gave a grand entertainment at his house in Jermyn-street: and thither numbers of the aforesaid disappointed fashionables hastened to tell their folly, and be well laughed at for it. The rooms were brilliantly lighted—the music was the most excellent that could be had—the variety of the preparations for the accommodation of a large company was costly in the extreme; and all appeared to be happy.

The Honourable Captain Stewart was seen leading off to a *quadrille* a beautiful young lady, according to the desire of his father, to whom he had not yet communicated his love, although he came to town in the morning for that purpose; when finding Lord Fanmore busied about his entertainment, he postponed the disclosure till the following day: but his thoughts were now dwelling on his lovely Catherine. He found no amusement in the crowds of brilliant fashion—he would rather have passed the evening in company with her whom he adored: yet he was happy—happy as he could be away from her; for he knew that his affection was returned. He was aware that most probably at that very moment she was thinking of him: perhaps her lips might be uttering his name!

When the *quadrille* was finished, he sauntered into the card-room, and unfortunately arrived in time to be called upon to join in a rubber of whist with three gentlemen, two of whom he knew, but the third was a stranger to him by name, although he had occasionally seen him before in the gay circles of fashion. He pleaded as an excuse that he was obliged to assist his father in doing the honours of the house; but his apologies were overruled, and he consented to sit down for one rubber. While the cards were being shuffled, the first of the two gentlemen, with whom Stewart was acquainted, said to him who was unknown to the young officer, "Sir George Mornay, allow me to introduce Captain Stewart, the second son of our noble host;" and the introduction took place; but a slight flush was seen upon the cheek of the baronet. It died away immediately, and he resumed the haughty look that so peculiarly denoted the excessive pride which lurked in his breast.

"I must congratulate you," said Stewart, "on the brilliant prospects of young Mr. Crawford, who—"

"You are acquainted with the family, I believe?" interrupted Sir George Mornay, not heeding the other's polite address, and eyeing him with the strictest scrutiny for an instant, as he uttered these words; although in general his manners were proverbially refined and gentlemanly.

"I am:—and I repeat, that as I feel peculiarly interested in the welfare of every member of that family, I felicitate you, who I am certain will be pleased, at the fortunate event which has lately befallen your heir."

"My heir, Sir? Mr. Crawford is not my heir—he shall not be—the whole family is unworthy of my notice!"

"The world," returned Stewart mildly, "generally acknowledges Mr. Crawford to be your heir under present circumstances—and I do not choose to believe the contrary; as for the family being unworthy your favour, I must beg to disagree with you on that point also."

"Tis well, sir," said Mornay coolly:—"you will insult me in your father's house? So be it, then—but know, young man, that you had better restrain that tongue of your's within the bounds of prudence!"

"I ask not your advice, sir—I am old enough to act, and to think for myself. However, let us resign, if you please, any idea of joining amicably in the game we were about to commence; because," added Stewart in a whisper, heard alone by him for whose ear it was intended solely, "we have not yet quite settled the point of difference with each

other: it is strange—it is unpleasant that we should dispute during the first few minutes of our acquaintance; but there is no alternative save the one—do you comprehend me?"

"I do, Sir—and shall not be backward," replied the haughty baronet, also in a low tone of voice, "in doing my duty;—" and he hastily walked away to mingle with the gay crowd, inwardly cursing the introduction that had taken place between him and Stewart—not through fear of a dangerous issue to the affair, but for private reasons of his own.

Stewart now retired from the brilliant scene to his own chamber for a few minutes, to collect his thoughts and reflect on his proceedings. He was rejoiced beyond measure that he had so publicly vindicated the character of the Crawford family, for it would give him a better claim to the hand of Catherine, and would prove his affection for her: but, on the other side, he was alarmed lest he had probably set Sir George Mornay against those who were the indirect origin of their feud, and whom he knew to be totally dependant on his bounty. He however resolved not to mention his sentiments, with regard to the beautiful girl, to his father, till after the affair with Mrs. Crawford's proud relative.

Having thus composed his ideas, he once more returned to the ball-room, where he found that the rumour of his dispute with Sir George Mornay, was already spread amongst the crowd present; and many a lovely girl cast a compassionate look upon the handsome officer, when she reflected that on the following morning his life would probably be exposed to the vengeful weapon of that individual whose fame as an excellent marksman was the subject of conversation at every shooting gallery in London.

Such was Sir George Mornay—but his danger, if a meeting did take place, was a matter of consideration to a very few; for he was already married, though separated—not divorced, from his wife; and even though his manners were those of a polished gentleman—even though his years had only reached the meridian of life, and his countenance was not displeasing as to feature, though stern as to appearance,—still his character was not generally admired. Mysterious whispers as to his pursuits were frequent amid the lovers of news or scandal in the metropolis;—his coffers were known to have been sadly drained—landed property he possessed none—and whence he derived his resources was a matter of speculation. Some declared he frequented *hells* or gambling-houses—others asserted his connexion with a gang of swindlers on the turf, although he himself never appeared at Newmarket nor Doncaster, nor other meetings of the kind: in fine, he was a person numbers talked of, and few loved.

However, Stewart's heart felt no sentiment of fear: and when his father anxiously questioned him for a moment concerning the business, he managed to pass over a narrative of it so slightly, that his parent could not possibly suppose any serious event would originate from it. This caution Stewart observed, fearful that Lord Fanmore might adopt measures to put a stop to the meeting.

The evening passed away—the grey dawn of morning streamed in at the windows, and admonished the few stragglers, who remained in the refreshment-room, to depart. Lord Fanmore and his eldest son had already retired some time to

their bed-chambers, while Captain Stewart remained behind for a particular purpose. This end was now gained. As the lingering party were preparing to take leave, he whispered cautiously to one, "My dear Howard—do, for God's sake, call upon me without fail at eight o'clock this morning—you will have time between this and then to snatch a little repose."

"I promise not to disappoint you, Stewart," returned the individual thus addressed, and who was a young man of six or seven-and-twenty. "At eight o'clock precisely I will be here."

"But on second thoughts," interrupted Stewart, "had we not better meet at some hotel than in my father's house at so unseasonable an hour?"

"Come to my lodgings in Pall-mall—you recollect the number," returned Mr. Howard: "none of your family can then suspect—I am aware of the nature of your business with me—trust to my circumspection."

They separated—all retired—and Stewart sought his chamber, but not immediately repose. He sat down at his desk, and wrote a long letter to Catherine, which was to be sent in case of anything fatal happening to himself. It contained a narrative of his dispute with Sir George Mornay, and concluded with every tender sentiment that love dictated, and that an impassioned bosom prompted the hand to write. He then, on another sheet, noted short memoranda for the disposal of his effects. Of course the handsome income allowed by his father could not be thus settled—it would return to him who gave it: but he possessed a small independence of a couple of hundred pounds a year, left him by a deceased relative—this he made over to Catherine, as well as the money to be produced by the sale of all his personal property, horses, carriages, plate, books, clothes, valuables, &c.

Having eased his mind in this manner, he carefully sealed the papers, directed them to his father, and placed them in his desk, as it was the first place likely to be examined should he fall by the hand of Sir George Mornay. He then lay down upon his bed, and gradually sank into slumber, from which he was aroused by the iron tongue which proclaimed the hour of eight from St. James's steeple. He hastily arose, and changed his attire—throwing aside the ball equipment: then descending softly, he hurried to the apartments of Mr. Howard in Pall-mall. That gentleman was already prepared to receive him: they accordingly proceeded to business. Stewart related at full, but of course in confidence, his affection for Miss Catherine Crawford, the conversation he had with her and her mother concerning it, the interest he took in the family, the reason of his coming to town at that moment, the insulting language of Sir George Mornay when speaking of the Crawfords, and his replies. A letter was therefore immediately penned, containing a challenge, and requesting that the baronet would provide himself with a friend as speedily as possible, to meet Mr. Howard in order to consult about the choice of weapons, time, and place of encounter, which were of course left to the disposal of Sir George Mornay, as he was the individual defied. Mr. Howard hastened in his own cabriolet, which he had purposely ordered to be in readiness at that early hour, and found the baronet in his dressing-room at Portland-place, having only arrived home in the evening of the day before the magnificent entertainment given by Lord Fanmore

"Mr. Howard," said the baronet, after he had perused the letter, "I was prepared for this, and have already spoken to the gentleman who will act as my friend. He is in the next room, to which you will oblige me by repairing, and arranging matters with him: of course both yourself and he will endeavour, Mr. Howard, to have it settled as speedily as possible."

"You may rely upon my promise to that effect," was the reply; "because my principal also desires that there may be no delay."

"I find so by this letter," said the baronet.

"Of the choice of weapons, and the choice of ground, Sir George Mornay—"

"I am not particular; my second will agree with you, Mr. Howard," returned the baronet, with that elegance of manner which so strongly characterized him, despite his other failings.

He then opened a side-door into an elegant apartment, to which he politely ushered his visitor, introduced him to a Mr. Stapleton, and withdrew.

When the two friends individually of the two foes were alone, they deliberated briefly on the matter. It was settled that Sir George Mornay and Captain Stewart should meet within three hours at St. John's Wood, the weapons to be pistols. These and other trifling preliminaries (such as that no person should be present, save the principals, the seconds, and the two surgeons) were carefully arranged; and Mr. Howard hastened back to Pall-mall, to prepare for the approaching duel.

Stewart was much pleased that it would be so speedily concluded: and after a scanty breakfast (for men in these situations, we know well, are not always inclined to eat much), he and Mr. Howard stepped into the latter's cabriolet, while a surgeon followed in a hired vehicle. They arrived at St. John's Wood, at the appointed spot, about five minutes previously to the other party. Sir George Mornay and his companions, however, soon made their appearance: the seconds proceeded to measure the ground—twelve paces—and load the pistols.

It was now when the two individuals chiefly concerned, were standing opposite to each other, armed with instruments of death, that Sir George Mornay's cheek waxed slightly pale; but not through dread of danger. Probably, a gloomy retrospection over some dark deeds caused that stern countenance to change its colour: perhaps, the soul, that defied the advance of the destroyer in the heated moments of peril, now shuddered when it felt that the grim skeleton might be so nigh, without the excitement of a bustling, busy scene to banish thought.

On the other hand, Stewart maintained the same unruffled look he usually wore; his hand trembled not—his heart beat with steady pulsation—his courage, in fine, was indubitable.

And now all was ready—the pistols were in the grasp of the opponents—the word was given—their heads were turned away, the weapons were raised, the triggers were drawn—and the report sounded loudly: but both shots were ineffectual. Stewart cast a single look upon Sir George Mornay—that baronet was perfectly cool and collected as was himself. With the excitement of the actual crisis, his colour had returned to his cheek; and he stood firmly—the same undaunted, the same stern being he generally was.

A minute had nearly elapsed in silence after the pistols had been discharged, when Mr. Stapleton stepped forward, drew Howard aside, with whom he conversed in whispers for another minute, and then addressed himself to Captain Stewart.

"Sir," said he, bowing, "you considered yourself the aggrieved person—you were the challenger: your friend and I are of course both equally averse to the shedding of human blood, particularly when it must flow from courageous men like yourself and Sir George Mornay; do you therefore, as a gentleman, Captain Stewart, consider that you have had sufficient satisfaction?"

"Wherefore this question, sir?—methinks, had it come from the lips of Mr. Howard it would have been more consistent with propriety."

"I demand pardon, then, Captain Stewart," returned Stapleton. "But I was desirous of arranging this unpleasant affair—"

"No explanation is necessary, my dear sir, I assure you," interrupted Stewart; and having cast one look towards Howard, he read assent in his countenance, and declared he was satisfied.

Sir George Mornay then came forward, and shook hands with his late foe, who however received him somewhat coolly; for he could not banish from his mind the disrespectful language made use of by him when talking of the family of his Catherine, nor what he believed to be the basely unfounded assertion concerning the heritage of young Crawford to the title. The affair being settled, the two parties took leave of each other, and returned homewards.

When Stewart and Howard reached Pall-mall, numerous were the grateful thanks of the former for the handsome and spirited way in which the latter had conducted his share of the business. Howard expressed his constant inclination to serve a friend; they then partook of a more substantial repast than they had eaten previous to the duel; after which Stewart returned to the house of his father in Jermyn-street.

On his arrival, he found Lord Fanmore in his study.

"So ho! young man," exclaimed he, as his son entered the room; "what adventure took you out so early?"

Stewart related nearly all that had happened, partially concealing the grounds of the quarrel till he should have opened his heart to his father concerning Catherine.

Well, my dear boy, give me your hand," cried the overjoyed parent:—"thank God you have escaped, for Mornay is an infernal good shot, I hear. You are a brave fellow, and I'm proud of you. What can I do for you, as a reward," enquired the old nobleman kindly; "shall I give you a cheque for a thousand pounds at once or will you have the pair of boys?"

"Now," thought Stewart to himself, "is an excellent opportunity." He accordingly began with a little hesitation:—"My dear father, I am heartily glad that my conduct has not offended you—"

"Offended me, you young rogue!"—(this appellation, by some antithesis of meaning, was intended as a term of endearment: our language is rich in these kinds of synonyms)—"why, you will win the hearts of all the ladies! By the bye,



William, you must soon think of looking out for a wife."

"I have thought of it, my lord——"

"Indeed; then you are right! There is," continued Lord Fanmore, counting with his fingers, "the Honourable Miss Eliza Caroline Anastasia Brandon: she has a purse in proportion to the length of her names—a cool fourteen thousand a year; but then she's more than three or four years older than you, my boy. Secondly, there is the beautiful Miss Araminta Viola Henrietta Nugent: she has only expectations, 'tis true; yet those expectations are far from visionary. What age can she write herself down at? Why—a modest two-and-twenty, I imagine: I should like you to have a younger wife, certainly; so you might cast an amorous glance four doors down this street at Lady Cornelia Josephine Rosetta Lincoln: nothing under three Christian names—I know them all, you see."

6

"Yes, my lord—but I have already selected——"

"Oh! oh! you agree with me. Well, Lady Cornelia is a nice girl—sixteen or seventeen only—the eldest daughter of Thomas William Steven Conway, Marquis of Sittingbourne, *et cætera*, *et cætera*, *et cætera*. Those *et cæteras* look well—aye? Now this conduct of yours with that Sir George Mornay, who never was any favourite of mine—I don't like his character; he is too mysterious an individual,—but as I was saying, that behaviour in the duel-business will ensure you success with the ladies. Take my advice, my boy—I am older than you a little, and have seen a great deal of life—depend upon it, that nothing wins a girl's heart sooner than courage—repeat me those lines of Shakspeare, in Othello, where—but no matter—you must take a wife, my boy!"

"I intend to do so, and have already selected a lady," exclaimed Stewart.

"Lady Cornelia Josephine Rosetta Lincoln I'll wager!" cried the old nobleman in a species of triumph.

"No my lord—another, with only *one* Christian name."

"Only one!" cried his lordship dolefully.

"Only one," proceeded his son. "And it was for the purpose of explaining my sentiments to you in this respect, and learning your immediate decision—"

"Oh! oh! that decision will render you happy or miserable for life—that reply of mine will either extend your days, or abridge them: isn't that the general language of lovers?—But only one name!"

"Really, my lord, you have represented my situation to the life."

"Well—were your poor mother alive—however, no matter. Let us hear something about this young lady: you are sure she is not a scullion? Great men marry beneath themselves now-a-days; and I smell a rat on account of your embarrassment."

"She is a lady by birth and education," said Stewart.

"Young?" demanded the nobleman.

"About sixteen."

"Pretty?"

"Beautiful as the morning star!"

"Oh! yes—yes—or the midnight moon, 'tis all the same—conveying not a single idea of any particular shade of loveliness: passion's language is replete with things it is delighted to call similes. Hyacinthine locks of amber hue—eyes glittering like diamonds—teeth like ivory—bosoms like snow—and a variety of others. But is she rich, with her solitary Christian name?"

"No, she has nothing."

"She cannot have much less, by God!" returned his lordship drily, as he buttoned up his breeches-pockets.

"But her brother's prospects are excellent," continued Stewart. "He is that very young man of whom you have doubtless heard so much; he that saved the wealthy miser's life at Cheltenham."

"Craw—Craw—Crawley—Crawburne—Crawford—is it not? the distant connection to Sir George Mornay, and heir to the title?"

"The very same," was the answer.

"Well—I don't see any very—very great objection to that match; she is decent as to birth—"

"Oh! yes—and were she not—" interrupted the Captain with all a lover's warmth; he meant to have added, that even if her family's origin were as low as possible, she herself was a treasure.

Lord Fanmore heeded him not, but proceeded in a musing tone, and a slow voice, to discuss her merits.

"Yes—she is decent as to birth; and if report speak true, this parsimonious old fellow is likely enough to leave a handsome property to her brother. This must be looked into. A million or two of money, my boy, covers a multitude of sins; and of course young Crawberry, or whatever his name may be, will enrich his sister—although she has a most dreadful lack of Christian names."

"Oh! how kind—how good you are, my dear father!" exclaimed Stewart, in rapture, seizing Lord Fanmore's hand, and wringing it violently;

for the business seemed to proceed much better than even his most sanguine expectations had dared to anticipate.

"Why—what is the boy about? we must get a straight-jacket for you directly: for God's sake get over your love fit, if it makes you pull my fingers off!"

"Pardon—a thousand pardons—"

"Granted—granted!" returned the nobleman.

"For I was really so delighted—so happy, my dear father."

"And why, you foolish, mad-cap fellow?"

"Because you declared that this little matter must be looked into," replied Stewart slowly.

"Yes—I think I did," said Lord Fanmore. "But what do you purpose doing with yourself to day?"

"To go to Bagshot immediately," was the response.

"For what, in the name of God?" asked the nobleman, opening his eyes in astonishment.

"Her mother lives near that town; I shall therefore hasten on the wings of love—"

"On the wings of the devil!" interrupted his lordship impatiently.

But Stewart continued, heedless of this intrusion upon his explanations:—

"And I shall inform that young lady, whose character and whose family's honour I took upon myself to vindicate,—that—"

"Gracious God! what is the boy chattering about? whose character has he vindicated? whose honour has he defended? her's with one name, I wager!" ejaculated Lord Fanmore.

Stewart replied in an affirmative, and then informed his father all that Sir George Mornay had said on the previous evening.

For a few minutes Lord Fanmore remained in a deep reverie. The denial of James Crawford's right of inheritance to the title of his haughty connexion, seemed extraordinary. Stewart considered it merely a malicious assertion; but his father pondered cautiously upon it. He however said nothing to his son at that moment, relative to the impression those words of Sir George Mornay had made on his mind. He merely desired William to hand him his portfolio, and then told him to withdraw, declaring he would consider the matter maturely, and give him a speedy answer—perhaps in an hour.

We may suppose that the anxiety of Stewart was excessive till his father recalled him to his study. He went first into the library, and endeavoured to amuse himself with a book: but he frequently found his ideas wandering, and his eyes anywhere, save on the pages before him. Then he reflected on the best mode of proceeding, if he were forbidden to demand the hand of Catherine in marriage. Never did an hour pass away so slowly in his life before—never did he enumerate every minute with such solicitude!

In the meantime Lord Fanmore wrote a short note to Sir George Mornay, requesting his immediate presence at his house as a particular favour, apologizing for the trouble he was giving, but declaring the reasons were important that induced him thus to send for the baronet from Portland-place. In half an hour Sir George Mornay made his appearance, being fortunately at home when the servant called with the above mentioned

letter. After the usual ceremonial inquiries concerning health, &c. Lord Fanmore commenced as follows:—

"Sir George Mornay," said he, "you will excuse the liberty I have taken in troubling you:—I should have done myself the honour of calling, had not a touch of the gout—"

"I beg you will not mention anything as an excuse," interrupted the baronet, suppressing a smile. "Whatever I can do to serve your lordship shall be performed with the greatest pleasure."

"I thank you sincerely.—My son William has made an offer to a connexion of yours, Miss Catherine Crawford—those are her two names—"

Sir George Mornay started slightly.

"I was already aware," said he, "that Captain Stewart frequented Mrs. Crawford's house; but that he had proposed to the daughter, I was ignorant."

"Yes—and despite that she has only one Christian name," proceeded the old peer, without heeding the interruption, "I am inclined to favour his wishes. Only—you will excuse me—I must speak candidly—you mentioned last night—that is, you inadvertently dropped a hint, I suppose, touching the hereditary rights of young Mr. Crawford to your title, in case of your death; and all men are liable to die, you know, from one hour to another."

"My lord, you push me closely with regard to that said inheritance: can I depend upon your secrecy—your prudence?" demanded Mornay in a low voice, after a moment's reflection.

"As I am a nobleman and a gentleman—I will never mention to a soul that which you are about to relate; not even to my own children—not even to William, whom the matter chiefly concerns," was the reply.

"Tis well, my lord. Listen, then: this Crawford cannot be my heir, because the certificate of his mother's marriage does not exist; the witnesses of the ceremony are nowhere to be found; the very clergyman, who united them, absconded, assumed a feigned name, and is now—no matter where. Without the necessary documents, therefore, how can this stripling prove, at my death, his legitimacy? He cannot—consequently the title becomes extinct."

"Great God!" exclaimed Lord Fanmore. "I thank you sincerely, however, for your very important information. But might I ask—"

"Ask anything: 'tis easy for me to reply, or to decline giving an answer, my lord," said Sir George Mornay, with a smile.

"Might I ask, then," continued the old peer, hesitatingly, notwithstanding the encouragement he had received from his polite visitor, "in what manner you came to know this—since none but Mrs. Crawford could probably apprise you of such a terrible secret?"

"You must really have the goodness to excuse me replying to the question: I however pledge you my honour that what I affirmed is strictly true."

"And are there no means of—of—concealing—"

"None—I know what you would say," interrupted Mornay with a malicious sneer. "James Crawford can never succeed to the title," he added emphatically.

"It becomes extinct then: does not that grieve you?" demanded Lord Fanmore.

"Not at all," replied Sir George Mornay, while his countenance was for a moment lighted up with savage—nay, demoniac triumph.

"Is this Crawford a bad young man?" enquired Lord Fanmore, surprised at the baronet's manner.

"There also I must beg to decline any explanation. Suffice it to say, that for some time I have kept my eyes upon the family, through a secret agent, and other means; therefore, all they do comes to my knowledge. And, now my lord, as my time is precious—"

"By the bye," interrupted the old nobleman, without heeding this hint, "I suppose that Mr. Fitzgerald will leave a splendid fortune to this Crawford?"

"Yes: there is no doubt of it. Besides, it is publicly rumoured to-day that the old miser has just adopted Mr. Crawford. I am glad of it, for the sake of the whole family—they are poor—"

"And subsisting upon your bounty?" observed Lord Fanmore enquiringly.

"Yes, indeed," said Sir George Mornay drily. "And now will your lordship permit me to say farewell?"

The baronet thereupon took his leave.

When the old nobleman was again alone in his study, he contemplated for some time the best means whereby he could effectually prevent his son from forming any engagement with Miss Catherine Crawford; and the only plan that suited his ideas was to hinder the slightest communication between them, either in the shape of visits to the cottage, secret interview with the connivance of the mother, or even by letter.

How this important end was to be accomplished did not exactly strike him at first; for his genius was none of the brightest. Still he was determined to accomplish it somehow or other. Not that his heart was bad—nor that he would willingly inflict pain upon his son. But pride—pride,—that demon which haunts every aristocratic dwelling,—was the motive power—the insidious prompter whose influence predominated over all other considerations.

Moreover, his lordship did not believe that people could ever die for love: and he looked upon the stories of Sappho, Pyramus and Thisbe, and others, in the same light as we regard the tales of Boccaccio's Decameron, the Arabian Nights, and the whole class of amusing fictions. All the wealth Crawford might inherit from the rich Mr. Fitzgerald went for nearly nothing, when he reflected that the young lady was not known in fashionable life, that she never would be a near relative to any one possessing a title, and that she had only one Christian name, which was as great a crime in Lord Fanmore's eyes as the poverty of a poor beggar, taken up under the vagrant act because he has no food nor lodging and cannot find work, is in the opinion of a Justice of the peace. At last, after rubbing his forehead various times, Lord Fanmore decided upon a scheme of writing to the mother a very clever letter, in which he would touch her feelings, wound her pride, and upbraid her for suffering his son to call at her house—thereby compelling her to forbid his visits in future. This idea so delighted him, that, without regarding the injustice of the proceeding, and being wholly absorbed

in prosecuting his determination to prevent the match, cost what it would, he snapped his fingers with an ecstasy of joy, and then mended his pen. Truly enough, he did compose one of the most extraordinary epistles that ever were seen. It was too long to be recorded in full: we will spare our reader, and only suffer him to form an idea of its nature by means of the following extract:—

"Not content, madam, with having cajoled my son into your house, you have laid a deceitful bait to entrap him for your daughter—your portionless daughter. And yet common sense must tell you that no one with a high name, would marry into your family? Your daughter is simple Catherine Crawford—a pretty alliteration, to be sure: but my son is the Honourable William Leo Alfred Stewart, second son of Henry Felix Julian Stewart, Lord Fanmore, *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*. Now I should have thought that your good sense would have instantly pointed out to your observation, my worthy lady, the unmeasurable distance between my son and your daughter. Your pride, moreover, ought to have bade you scorn the practice of enticing handsome and wealthy young men—well born, besides—to make love to your daughters. And then again madam, I—as a father, appeal to you as a mother—I say, that were my son to marry without my consent, I should die, first having cut him off for ever with a shilling, and left him my curse to boot as his legacy. Do you think a parent's hopes are to be blasted by you?—no—no—my good woman: and I venture to hint, ere I conclude, that you had better take a lesson from this letter, and mind your manners for the future.

P.S. If my son has made your daughter any presents, I have no objection to her keeping them."

Now, no one save a brute, or an *ignoramus*, could certainly have penned such a letter to a female, whatever she might have done, or whatever were her rank in society: but Lord Fanmore had been in the Royal Naval Service during the early part of his life, and had commanded a man-of-war, on board of which a captain is as despotic a tyrant as he pleases: thus the nature of the letter appeared to him only a little severe, while really it was insulting and disgraceful to the highest degree.

The affair being settled to Lord Fanmore's satisfaction, he rang for his son William, and desired him to be seated. He then deliberately informed the anxious lover, that he had maturely considered the matrimonial speculation he was desirous of entering into, and had resolved to hear no more about it.

In vain did poor Stewart almost melt into tears—in vain did he manifest the most lively grief:—his father was even affected for an instant himself; but supposing this ebullition of sorrow to be only temporary, he persisted firmly in his refusal to permit the wished-for union.

Stewart at last saw farther solicitation to be fruitless—he saw that he had exhausted to no purpose his persuasive arguments and his strong appeals;—he therefore rose with tears in his eyes, looked once at his father with a reproachful glance, and left the room, closing the door quickly after him.

Five minutes elapsed, and Lord Fanmore thought he had used a little too much harshness; he rang to recall his son, and endeavour to comfort him; but the servant who answered the summons said that Captain Stewart had suddenly left the house, after taking something from his chamber—most probably money.

"Tell me when he returns," said Lord Fanmore, vainly endeavouring to subdue the feelings of uneasiness which had seized upon him.

CHAPTER XV.

Let observation, with extensive view,
Survey mankind from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life,
Then say, how hope and fear, desire and hate
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate.

JOHNSON.

IN the meantime it became rumoured throughout the metropolis that Mr. Fitzgerald had formally adopted James Crawford; and the curious world, too, had at last obtained a peep of the great man and the fortunate youth. Now then was to commence the deeply-laid scheme of depredation: and as if Fortune were determined to favour for a time these nefarious ends, an opportunity of making a beginning soon presented itself.

There was a rich Jew in London, who had no objection to make his twenty-five or thirty per cent by any speculation that appeared so clear and straightforward as the present. He therefore wrote a letter to Crawford, in which he declared that hearing of his adoption by Mr. Fitzgerald, and being aware of the parsimonious ideas of the wealthy miser, he begged without giving offence to hint that the natural inclination to liberality in youth was of course repugnant to such stinginess, and concluded by actually offering the young impostor a loan to any reasonable amount, and upon *advantageous terms*. This letter was conveyed to Crawford with all imaginable secrecy, and was immediately the subject of consultation between him and Fitzgerald. It was agreed that Mr. Nathaniel should be attended to directly. A suitable reply was written, in which Crawford informed the kind Israelite that he would call upon him at his house in Golden-Square on the following morning at twelve o'clock precisely.

In the evening, as James was walking by himself down Bond-Street, after Fitzgerald had retired to bed, he met Arnold. This was the first time they had encountered each other since Crawford had been in London under his present character; and Arnold pretended to testify great pleasure in seeing his young pupil once more. He congratulated him on the success of the scheme; and when allusion was made to Rivingstone's predicament, advised him not to run the risk of attracting dangerous notice by visiting the prisoner in Newgate. He gave him some "useful counsel" how to treat with the money-lender; after which he appointed a meeting, for eleven o'clock on the ensuing evening in Hyde Park for the sake of privacy. They then separated.

When Crawford once more sought his apartment in the hotel, he sat down to write a letter to his mother. His object was to prevent that affectionate parent from hastening to London to felicitate him on his supposed prosperity. Indeed, as he penned the deceitful epistle, a tear stole down his cheek:—he thought of what he was, and what he might have been!

Gifted with splendid talents and a handsome exterior, he would probably have become an ornament to his country, had he entered some useful profession, and never deviated from the strict path of rectitude and honour.

But when the page, that teemed with a thousand specious falsehoods, was concluded, his remorse fled at the same time, for he remembered the renown he had made for himself already—the sums he was about to acquire, albeit dishonestly;—he pondered on the praises of Arnold—the enjoyments of his present mode of life, surrounded by

luxury, comfort, and adulation :—and he at length retired to his couch with a light heart, and speedily sank into a deep slumber.

Then the temperament of his mind again changed—and horrible dreams oppressed him. He saw his mother weeping bitterly over him as he lay upon his pillow : and though her scalding tears of anguish fell quickly on his face—though she called him her dear deluded, miserable son—now the ruin, once the source of, her earthly happiness—the shame of the world, the reproach of the family—though she mingled upbraidings with tender epithets to his name, he could not speak to comfort her : a load lay heavy at his heart, and prevented him from giving utterance to a single syllable. Suddenly the scene changed : he was standing amongst a crowd—before a gibbet on which a malefactor was about to suffer the penalty that justice awarded to his crimes. The criminal was presently led forth ; and as he turned upon the drop ere the cap was drawn over his head, Crawford beheld the former partner of his villany—Rivingstone. He uttered a cry of horror—the culprit beckoned him to approach the gallows—a species of fascination compelled him to obey—and he was warned by the doomed man to quit the ways of vice, or he would end his days in a similar manner.

With another cry he awoke.

Fortunately no one had been aroused by his convulsive exclamations ; the dawn of morning gleamed in at his window—he forgot the singular visions that had haunted his slumbers, and lay till a late hour, pondering on the business he was engaged that day to prosecute.

At twelve o'clock, according to appointment, Crawford knocked at the door of Mr. Nathaniel's house in Golden-square. He was conducted by a servant richly dressed, into a handsomely furnished apartment, where he found a little old gentleman seated behind a table that was covered with a variety of papers. He was probably sixty years old, and was neatly dressed in a suit of black, with a white neckcloth. His features were strongly marked by an aquiline cast of countenance :—his eyes were still bright and fiery.

He politely beckoned his visitor to be seated, and commenced as follows :—

"Mr. Crawford, I must first apologize for the liberty I took in introducing myself to your notice ;—but of course," continued he with a smile, "we must all take care of Number One, Mr. Crawford ;—and if you will give me the preference in raising any sum your immediate necessities may require, I shall use you well, and be infinitely obliged into the bargain. Of course I am aware of the character of your benefactor ; I am also well aware that till his death few will be the guineas of his that will cross your hand. Good God ! with such a property—But if it be not impertinent, Mr. Crawford, you are the heir to Sir George Mornay, are you not ?"

"I am, Sir," replied Crawford, thinking that a little falsehood would do his cause more good than if he were to confess the real truth concerning the certificate—a circumstance which he deeply deplored in spite of the representations of Arnold.

"Sir George Mornay has not used me particularly well," continued Mr. Nathaniel. "About two years ago I lent him upwards of five thousand pounds on his bill alone for eighteen months ; it became due, and was protested. A few weeks since I was inclined to advance him a farther loan

of another thousand pounds, on his bond for the whole at six months : he pledged me his word it should be duly settled at that period."

"But about my business, if you please, Sir," cried James, assuming an important air, and making a motion of impatience.

"A thousand pardons, Mr. Crawford—now then to business. My plan, is, Sir, that you give me post-obit bills—do you understand ? When your patron is no more,—and may his death happen as soon as convenient to yourself!—you will of course inherit his extensive property—then, as a man of honour, you will repay me : but, in the meantime, as I run a little risk—"

"Risk—I do not see how or where!" exclaimed the youth, feigning a tone of indignation.

"Oh ! no, Sir—nothing farther than that if you died before him, you know—"

"Then such is his regard for me, that he would pay every thing !"

"That's well, Sir—but as I was saying," proceeded Mr. Nathaniel, "you will not object if I ask the small sum of *fifty per cent*—it is not too much."

"Too much for me, however, to waste," returned Crawford, determined to do the business with address and pretend that his necessities were not so urgent as to drive him to make an extraordinary sacrifice of money : indeed no actor could have possibly played his part better ; and Mr. Nathaniel was exquisitely duped.

"Fifty is not too much, Sir, I repeat. Notwithstanding," said the Jew after a little more haggling, "thirty-five will not hurt you."

"No—I agree to that—it is somewhat more reasonable," was the reply.

"And what sum would you require at present, Mr. Crawford ?"

"Tell me your means, if you please, Sir, as well as your inclinations," answered the youth, with an apparent air of indifference.

"Any thing up to seven thousand pounds, to be paid in two sums—one within three days, the other in six, from this period."

"I don't want so much as that at once," said Crawford, thinking it prudent not to ruin the chance of obtaining future advances by being too hasty as to the present. "If I could have four thousand pounds on Saturday next—this is Tuesday—I should be glad."

"Your wishes shall be attended to, Sir : in the meantime I trust that our transaction will never escape your lips."

"On my most solemn word of honour," was the reply.

"Good, Sir—and on Saturday morning, at twelve o'clock, the necessary papers shall be ready, and the money shall be upon the table. Many thanks for the preference you have honoured me with, Sir—I shall do all I can to accommodate you as often as you require my assistance : only be silent."

"Never fear, Mr. Nathaniel—for my own sake I will ; because if Mr. Fitzgerald were to hear of our negotiation, he would discard me for ever."

With these words, Crawford took his leave, elated with the result of the affair.

Fitzgerald was overjoyed. They saw the success that attended their plans—they trusted to the greedy avarice of speculative money-lenders to supply their wants, and enable them to secure a handsome property ere they decamped. Crawford could not help feeling himself puffed up with

pride at the admirable way in which he had duped the Jew; and the circumstance called to his mind those beautiful words of Volney, which are thus rendered into English:—"As for me I swear by all laws human and divine, by the statute that is written in the heart of man, that the hypocrite and the deceiver shall be themselves deceived!"

In the evening, true to his appointment, James met Arnold in Hyde-Park, and communicated to him all that had passed during his conference with Mr. Nathaniel. Arnold was delighted: he caressed his young victim with the apparent kindness of a father, desired him to attend to all applications of that kind, promised to assist him by means of his advice in difficult cases, and bade him adieu once more, naming the hour of eleven again on the following Saturday evening for their next interview, casually alleging that business would take him out of town till that period. Crawford returned home, and passed a better night than the former one.

When he awoke in the morning, he heard a confused murmur in the next room to that where-in he slept; and presently the rattle of dice told him that play was going on. He enquired, and found that a party of young men had sate up the whole night gambling, and drinking a great quantity of wine.

As James was walking down the passage to call his friend Fitzgerald, *alias* Dimmock, the door of the apartment, where this was going on, opened violently, and a young man rushed out, wringing his hands, gnashing his teeth, and exhibiting every symptom of despair. An idea instantly flashed across the mind of Crawford, that, by assisting this individual the cause of whose grief he guessed, the deed would confirm his fame, and consecrate still more the imposture he was engaged to support. He therefore accosted him, desired him to be pacified, led him into his own room, and when he was a little collected, inquired the nature of his misfortune.

"My father," said the young man, who was good looking, and genteelly dressed, "is an eminent merchant in the City: his name is Maxwell. He supplies me liberally with money—yesterday he gave me a hundred pounds—I have this night lost every farthing in gambling, with some people who call themselves my friends. It is not that I care about the money—neither would my father, for he is rich: but I must tell him the real truth—I could not possibly condescend to a falsehood—and his heart will be almost broken, when he knows his son is addicted to play."

"He shall not know it, Mr. Maxwell," exclaimed Crawford vehemently.

"He must!" exclaimed the young man. "He will ask me how I have expended the sum he gave me for the express purpose of procuring for myself a certain horse to which I have taken a fancy."

"Will you then accept the loan of the money from me?" enquired James in a most delicate manner, as he took out his purse, and tendered him a bank of England note for a hundred pounds which was about the half of what remained to him and Fitzgerald from the supplies furnished by Arnold.

"Good, generous stranger!" exclaimed Maxwell, shedding tears at such an act of apparently disinterested kindness; "I receive with gratitude your offer! But how can I ever sufficiently repay your noble conduct—words are all, besides the mere return of the money, that must express my

sense of obligation to you: indeed you are an angel, sent to save me!"

"Say no more about it—I am happy to have it in my power to benefit you," cried James, taking the other's hand. "I will give you my card—my name is Crawford—call upon me when you feel inclined."

"Crawford! what—are you the celebrated youth whose noble conduct to an old man at Cheltenham has placed him on the list of Fortune's most prosperous votaries?"

"I am the one who happily saved the life of the wealthy Mr. Fitzgerald," replied James, assuming a modest air, while his heart glowed with secret pride; "and it has pleased God to reward me for it."

"And all the world, then, will be benefitted, when you inherit the vast property that will accrue to you at Mr. Fitzgerald's death. Of what use is hoarded wealth now to the miser?" said Maxwell, somewhat indignantly.

"Hush—he has his faults—but he is as a father to me, and I must not hear him blamed!" exclaimed Crawford, with a serious look.

At that moment their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the object of it. He had taken the precaution of listening first, ere he made his appearance; and he had gathered most carefully the whole discourse.

Pleased with the stratagem of Crawford, he wore a smile upon his countenance, as Maxwell, awed by the presence of the mighty man, related in a trembling voice the generous deed of James.

The matter only required a finishing stroke to make it complete.

Fitzgerald did it to perfection.

Changing his smile into a stern look, while Maxwell shrank beneath his frown, he thus addressed the youth before him:—"Young man, attend to the advice of one who has seen many more winters than you have; and remember, that if gambling be your pursuit, you are lost—irremediably lost. However, accept that small sum—never think of repaying it—accept it from me as a gift that may perhaps work a favourable change in you. And you, my dear James," he continued, renewing his smile, and taking the hand of Crawford, who also stood respectfully in the presence of his patron, "you have done a good deed—may heaven bless thee, my boy!"

And the old gentleman wiped his eyes with his coat sleeve, as he turned out of the room, apparently to hide his emotions, but in reality to enjoy a hearty laugh at the expense of the world thus so readily gulled.

Never was there a scene of more complete deception; young Maxwell whimpered like a child, hastened to tell his companions, who had won his money during the night; and as Crawford was descending to his breakfast, they actually all crowded round him, to gaze more freely upon the individual who had not only done so noble an action, but who was considered to be so peculiarly fortunate in his acquaintance with Fitzgerald.

The news of the princely deed could not be kept a secret—it ran like wildfire over London:—Crawford's idea was as successful as it was admirable; everybody lauded him and his protector to the skies—every one thanked God for being about to put enormous wealth into the hands of a youth who knew how to use it so charitably!

In the course of the day Crawford received a note of thanks from the happy father of young Marwell, who had heard the tidings now universally known, and who declared that his son had received a lesson he would never forget. The letter concluded with an invitation for himself and Fitzgerald to dinner the following Sunday at six o'clock, expressing also a hope that the honour of being allowed to entertain them would not be denied. It was therefore agreed that, as Fitzgerald's habits were deemed to be sedentary and retired, he should remain at home, and Crawford should accept it. A reply was written to that effect.

CHAPTER XVI.

What I can a single letter thus effect
A world of ill!

Old Poem.

In the meantime, the letter of Lord Fanmore reached Mrs. Crawford. Her indignation on perusing it left no room, and allowed no time, for grief. She knew not what steps to take in order to vindicate herself to the insulting nobleman, who appeared to set so small a value on female delicacy or a fellow-creature's feelings; and she was equally perplexed how to break the news to her daughter. But being a woman of a strong mind, she speedily resolved how to act with regard to Captain Stewart; and her proper pride, so grossly injured, served to confirm her determination.

She made no doubt but that the letter had been written without his knowledge: she was well aware that his refined feelings and gentlemanly behaviour would have essentially tempered the style of it. But she was compelled to adopt the alternative of forbidding him the house—of refusing his letters—of denying him even an opportunity of explaining himself or of requesting an elucidation of the motives that induced her thus to decline his farther acquaintance; because she saw that this mode of conduct would eventually drive him to seek that explanation from his father. Without commenting upon its contents, she enclosed Lord Fanmore's letter in a cover, and sent it back again to its author.

But how would poor Catherine support the heart-rending tidings? Never had mother a more disagreeable office—a more unwished-for duty to perform. By degrees, however, Mrs. Crawford made her aware that the father of Captain Stewart was averse to the match, and that she must give up all present hopes of being united to him. Of course she said nothing concerning the insults contained in the letter. Those she cherished in her own bosom.

But it were vain to attempt a description of the poor girl's grief. She loved Stewart with the sincerest affection—she cherished every word he had tenderly said to her on the day he declared his passion. She found that the ridiculous space of a few minutes had taken away something material to support the fabric of her felicity in life. She perceived that there was a void in her bosom, and vainly sought for consolation. At length a torrent of tears partially relieved her—she threw herself into the arms of her mother, with whom she experienced a balmy sympathy.

The night, which succeeded this eventful day, was the longest she had ever passed; broken and

intermittent were the unrefreshing slumbers that occasionally visited her eyelids; and unpleasant were the dreams that haunted those slumbers.

In the morning she arose, pale, unwell, and feverish.

The hour of breakfast passed heavily away; and at about eleven o'clock a horseman stopped at the gate, dismounted with precipitate haste, ran furiously up the little garden-walk, and knocked loudly at the door. It was Captain Stewart. Catherine was fortunately in her bedroom at the time; and that chamber commanded not a view of the front of the house.

Her mother desired her to stay there, when the thundering appeal at the door was made; she then sent the servant to say that for the future she must be sorry to dispense with the honour of Captain Stewart's visits.

This announcement came like the shock of a thunderbolt upon the unhappy young man: he had left his father the afternoon of the previous day, to seek consolation with his beloved. He had fondly hoped to be blessed with her innocent smile, and with the approving glance of her mother. He had arrived too late at Hounslow the evening before to repair then to the cottage—he had passed a dreadful night—till the dawn of morning gleamed in at his window. At an early hour he had mounted his horse, and had galloped to the dwelling of his fair one with the speed of Richard Turpin, when performing his celebrated ride to York.

Then he was refused admittance!

"Great God, what a complication of evils," he exclaimed audibly.

He besought the servant to inform him if he had offended Mrs. or Miss Crawford: she knew nothing—she could give no reply. He desired only a moment's interview with her mistress: the door was shut quickly—no one was at the window—he rushed distractedly down the garden, sprang upon his still panting steed, forgetful of the poor animal's want of rest even for a few minutes, and returned to Hounslow as quickly as his horse could bear him,—he himself being in a state bordering on despair.

His hopes were destroyed—she whom he loved was concealed from his view—and he was subject to the commands of a tyrannical father!

All this nearly turned his brain—and he was obliged to be bled the moment he dismounted at the barracks. The surgeon pronounced him to be in a high fever—he was put to bed, and shortly after became quite delirious, raving of her he could not see, cursing his own fate, blaming his hard-hearted parent, and sobbing like a child. The beautiful locks, that had so gracefully clustered over his forehead, were cut closely off; and two soldiers were placed in his apartment to keep him from laying violent hands upon himself. Presently he sank into a deep sleep, exhausted by his ravings. A letter was written in the course of the day by the surgeon of the regiment to Lord Fanmore, representing the case of his son's sudden malady. It was not sent off till the evening: a postscript was then added to say that Stewart had awoke delirious still, and had suffered a relapse.

On the following day, Lord Fanmore made his appearance at Hounslow, and was greatly shocked to find that the surgeon had not in the least exaggerated the condition to which his son was reduced. He nevertheless forbore to confess his

knowledge of the cause; for that disappointed love was really the spring of the young officer's malady,—added to excitement and defeated hopes,—Lord Fanmore could no longer hide from himself, however disagreeable was the actual truth; and he was afraid the affair would terminate in compelling him to give his consent to a marriage he abhorred. Having recommended the surgeon to move Captain Stewart to his (Lord Fanmore's) house in Jermyn-Street, the moment he was enabled to bear the fatigue of a journey, or to advertise him immediately should the danger of his condition increase, he returned to London, being called thither by particular business: but he was not a little annoyed at what had happened.

CHAPTER XVII.

And thus this foul deceit progresseth well—
Deceit so foul that when the bubble bursts,
A nation will be spattered with its slith.

Old Poem.

We must leave Lord Fanmore to chew the bitter cud of his own reflections, and hasten once more to James Crawford.

On the Saturday appointed, and at twelve o'clock precisely, he repaired to the house of Mr. Nathaniel, who received him with a smile, and conducted him into the same apartment where he had formerly seen him. On the table lay the Bank-Notes as well as a *post-obit* bill for the amount agreed to, and drawn upon the strength of Mr. Fitzgerald's supposed property's devolving to James Crawford, his putative adopted son.

"Is it your wish that the interest of thirty-five per cent. should run on, and be added with compound interest to the principal?" inquired the Jew; "or how will you best arrange it to your satisfaction?"

"In the way you propose, I should imagine," returned Crawford.

"Very well, Sir—please to sign this."

Crawford accordingly put his hand to the bill, and wrote his name in the spot indicated.

"That is all, Sir," remarked Mr. Nathaniel. "If you will take the trouble to count the notes, you will find that the sum is correct—four thousand pounds."

"Yes," said James, scarcely able to conceal his delight:—and having carelessly glanced over the notes, he doubled them up, and placed them in his pocket.

"As soon as your necessities prompt you, Sir, I shall again be ready to contribute to your wants—but not before the following Saturday; or Tuesday week would be more convenient still."

"I shall not forget you, my dear Sir," returned James, as he shook hands with the duped Israelite, and took his leave.

We may of course imagine the joy of Fitzgerald. He had never seen so much money in his life, while the world was supposing him to possess millions. The bill of the hotel was instantly called for, and liberally paid; had they not demanded it the obsequious Mr.—, of Long's hotel, would never had done "such an ungentlemanly thing as ask a gentleman for a farthing." He scorned the vulgar idea of "having a sum to make up," or "a half year's rent to pay the following Monday or Tuesday morning." As it was, notwithstanding his refined notions upon these points, he was well pleased; for his two guests lived at a splendid rate, though for form's sake Fitzgerald sometimes pretended to quarrel with the profusion

in which James would order the choicest species of wines.

That evening Crawford put three thousand pounds into his pocket, and met his friend Arnold in Hyde-Park, at the time and place appointed.

"You must be the treasurer," said James, after having related his adventures with the money-lender that morning; "I have put into this paper three quarters of the loan: with the rest we paid our account at the hotel, and kept the balance to answer for various articles that are necessary, such as clothes, &c."

"You have done well, my dear boy: I will keep all till we be safe in France and can share the profits of our schemes. But had you not better write again to your mother!" demanded Arnold.

"I received a letter this morning—but I hardly read it, for I was so overwhelmed with anxiety till the matter was concluded with Nathaniel. I nevertheless see, that by a strange coincidence the very Captain Stewart, of whom we borrowed some money one night, has made an honourable offer to my sister Kate, and on account of his father's dislike to the match has been rejected by my mother."

"Indeed," returned Arnold drily; for he was already aware of the circumstances from some quarter or another, as well as of Stewart's illness.

"Stay—here is the letter—peruse it at your leisure," said James, as he handed it to his companion.

They then talked upon indifferent matters, principally concerning the affair with Maxwell, and parted, having made another appointment for the following Saturday in the same place, and at the same hour; for Arnold was going out of town, he said, upon particular business.

The next evening, at six o'clock, Crawford, elegantly dressed, presented himself at the house of Mr. Maxwell in the City—the name of the street is immaterial. He was introduced to a splendid drawing-room, where Charles, the youth he had assisted, hastened forward to receive, and introduce him to his parents.

The old merchant was a tall, fine looking man, neither handsome nor ugly, with a peculiarly good humoured countenance, and laughing eyes prominently set. His wife was a little vulgar, having been the daughter of an eminent soap-boiler, who thought that teaching her the use of her needle and the arrangements of housekeeping, was much better than expending money for pianos, dancing-masters, and professors of languages. James was received cordially by both, Mrs. Maxwell being "very glad to 'ave the honour of his company, to cut his mutton at her 'ouse?" and when he enquired after her health, he was informed that, "thank God, she was generally pretty 'arty!"

Nothing was said relative to the transaction which had thus procured for Crawford the acquaintance of his present entertainers; the conversation turned on different matters, in all of which the good lady of the house took an active part; but unfortunately she had a wretched knack of supplying words with *aitch's*, where they were not wanted by robbing those which required them.

Presently the door opened, and a young lady, probably about two-and-twenty, entered the room. Beautiful, she was not, to be sure—pretty she



decidedly was: moreover still her countenance was pleasing, and a fine figure recommended her in a ball-room, where it could be shown off to advantage amongst the intricacies of the mazy dance.

This was the sister of Charles Maxwell;—her name was Sophia.

Many an honest son of a rich merchant had endeavoured to engage her love, and chain her to him in the bonds of matrimony; for she was amiable though not over accomplished, truly:—but then she possessed a settlement of fifty thousand pounds, left her by a deceased uncle, who accumulated his wealth, good man! by the slaughter and sale of divers animals, such as sheep, calves bullocks, pigs, &c.—in other words he was a butcher of repute in the City. Moreover, her father was known as an honourable merchant upon Change.

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Now the lucid idea had entered the head of Mr. Maxwell, that if he could arrange in any way a matrimonial engagement between his daughter and Mr. James Crawford, it would be a very desirable point gained. Her fortune, joined to his enormous heaps of riches, when Mr. Fitzgerald should die, would be able to command immense influence in the City, and might probably procure a title one of these days—for a vulgar ambition directed many of Mr. Maxwell's plans. He was therefore very much pleased, when he saw his daughter and their visitor enter into a lively conversation together.

Two or three other guests, who had also been invited, entered one after another—a tanner, a hatter, and a tailor: the dinner was then announced. James handed Sophia to the table, and to the annoyance of the tanner paid her great attention during the repast: nor was she displeased, for the

youth was gentlemanly in his manners, and agreeable in his person, although his cheeks were pale, and his mood occasionally changing from delight to melancholy gloom. Indeed old Mr. Maxwell congratulated himself in his sleeve upon his daughter having made a lively impression, even at first sight, on the heart of Crawford; so she really had—but her fifty thousand pounds were the main cause.

The evening passed away, and Crawford returned home to the hotel, determined to improve his acquaintance with Miss Sophia.

In the course of the next day, Fitzgerald intimated his opinion that they ought now to take a house, as the extravagancies of the hotel but ill accorded with the parsimonious habits he had the credit of possessing. To this James agreed: he was nevertheless averse to act without the advice of Arnold. He however recollected that a week must elapse before he could have an opportunity of again consulting him. He therefore consented that a handsome house should be forthwith taken, suitable to the convenience and number of its intended inmates. Fitzgerald recommended Crawford to seek an interview with Mr. Nathaniel, who was likely either to have houses of his own or to be able to give an introduction to those who had.

This hint was adopted; and Crawford accordingly waited upon Mr. Nathaniel, and told him his business.

"I am infinitely obliged to you, Sir, for your consideration," said the Jew: "but I hope your patron will not discover that you have any transactions with me; for in that case——"

"Oh! no—I assure you that he is perfectly ignorant of the whole matter. You may call upon him, and say that having heard of his intentions——"

"Yes, I comprehend perfectly; and it is exactly suitable to my wishes," continued the Jew; "for I have a commodious house of my own—an excellent house in Conduit-Street, ready furnished, moreover. It was inhabited for seven years by the Honourable Mr. Flashwell, till he was ruined six months ago."

"Well—that will do—call in a couple of hours upon Mr. Fitzgerald—he shall be at home to receive you: in fact he seldom stirs out at all."

Crawford then took his leave.

In an hour Mr. Nathaniel called at Long's hotel, and was received with all due respect by the old impostor. They proceeded to examine the dwelling in Conduit-Street: it suited Fitzgerald's purposes exactly; and after a little haggling on both sides, the rent was amicably settled, the Jew taking good care of himself. In a few days Crawford and his companion removed into it, having, with the assistance of the attentive Mr. Nathaniel, procured suitable servants.

Here let us leave them comfortably settled—deceiving the world, and laughing at those whom they duped; while we say one word more concerning poor Emily at Southampton.

CHAPTER. XVIII.

Has hope already vanished? Or does she
But yield to vague alarms, too soon to grow
More palpable?

Old Poem.

SINCE the conversation which Emily had with Hunter, in which he declared himself to be ever her friend, she felt some relief—she knew not why

—but his presence was a source of pleasure to her.

A melancholy style of discourse pleased her; for though she never doubted that Arnold would speedily perform his promise, and make her his wife, still the present delay alarmed and vexed her. Often were her tears shed upon her pillow—often were her sighs echoed by the low voice of the evening breeze, as she sat in that arbour where guilty joy had first seduced her virgin step from the path of rectitude!

Every morning she watched eagerly at about nine o'clock for the approach of the post-man: but daily she sickened with disappointment, as she saw him pass by the door without stopping. Why her mother should procrastinate giving her consent so long, she was at a loss to divine; why an affectionate parent could not return an almost immediate answer regarding the matter she vainly sought to conjecture.

At the same time she fondly hoped that Arnold's suspense was as great as her own—that his anxiety equalled her's. Poor girl—never was any deluded victim of base seduction so completely deceived as she!

"You suffer, Emily," said Hunter to her one day; "I am certain you are unhappy. I, who am ever in agonies of mental affliction, know too well its symptoms in another. Cannot the sympathy—the affinity of sorrow lead me to detect thine? Oh! yes—too well!"

"I am really a little uneasy only concerning certain family affairs, my dear friend," was the reply; for Emily saw she could conceal her anxiety no longer.

"God grant that thou may'st be happy—that thou may'st be prosperous in thy love—in thine attachment to Arnold!" exclaimed Hunter with the enthusiasm that often characterized his language; for his was a noble mind, though racked and tortured by despairing passion. "Long, long after this poor heart of mine shall have passed from its present burning state to the tenement of the grave, may your children flourish to place a flower upon my tomb; while you, Emily, will tell them the melancholy tale of one who loved fondly, and pined away ere youth had scarcely ripened into manhood!"

"Oh! talk not thus; many happy years will yet await you! Indeed," continued Emily, "I have often thought, that when Arnold shall have made me his wife, how happy we shall be to have you ever near as our friend—our brother."

"What—then you occasionally lavish a thought upon one who is dead to the world!" exclaimed Hunter eagerly.

"Yes—frequently; I would give the best ten years of my life to see you happy and contented. Your melancholy has so excited my pity."

"You are an angel, Emily!" cried the enthusiastic young man. "To be deplored by you—to know that my name is sometimes upon your tongue, connected with epithets of commiseration—Oh! that is indeed balm to my wounds!"

"Then you may feel confident that I shall never retire to my bed without breathing for your welfare a supplication to heaven:—for I," thought she, "have need—great need of prayer!"

Hunter was affected even to tears;—he gazed upon the lovely form near him—a drop was also standing in Emily's eye—he wrung her hand—looked earnestly into her beautiful countenance,

and retired with unutterable feelings agitating his bosom.

Two or three more days passed away—still no letter from Arnold! Emily's suspense became insupportable—her anxiety alarming. She therefore sat down, and addressed an epistle to him, in which she expressed all she endured in so touching manner that a misanthrope himself would have wept: she besought him by all he revered in heaven—by her tears—her affection—to write or hasten immediately to her—and to send or bring a definitive reply from her mother. She demanded his advice—his permission, as to whether she herself should communicate with Mrs. Crawford on the subject and declare that her happiness depended upon the award her parent gave.

This, with many tender sentiments, many injunctions not to forget her, and reiterated entreaties to attend to her requests, composed the contents of her letter.

Arnold received it on the following day, and it was in the evening of this day that he met Crawford at a certain spot in Hyde Park, and received the greater portion of Mr. Nathaniel's property. He told James, as the reader must remember, that he was going out of town on particular business; his real intention was to pay a visit to Southampton, and take the best possible means to prevent Emily from writing to her mother, a proposition which had seriously alarmed him. He saw the necessity of undeceiving her at once as to their immediate union:—he might soothe her by promising marriage at a future day,—for he knew that suspense was killing her—and he reflected that she had better know the worst than remain in a state of incertitude.

With this impression he set off, and arrived at Southampton in time for Mrs. Otway's dinner.

We may suppose the joy of Emily—the delight she experienced in once more beholding, the dear object whom she adored. She felt as happy as the bird, that, having been long imprisoned in a cage, suddenly obtains its liberty. Her eyes beamed with gladness—her glowing bosom heaved with a sigh of pleasure.

She naturally conceived that some favourable news would greet her ears from the lips of Arnold; she longed for the dinner to be over, that they might steal together into the arbour at the end of the garden, and converse on the matters that interested them. Never did any meal pass away so tediously. It is always a formal one, which we are glad to despatch with all possible speed: for if we dine alone, the useless *paraphernalia* of dishes, finger-cups, &c. (by some deemed comforts) are to us irksome; and if we dine abroad, the ceremony is overwhelming.

The dessert, however, came at last; and in half an hour Emily was seated with Arnold in the summer-house.

Her head reclined upon his shoulder—his hand clasped her delicate waist: she smiled upon him—he kissed her delicious lips, and drank in her mellifluous breath.

Could he defeat the hopes of one so fair? could he destroy her peace of mind for ever? could he abandon the girl—the confiding girl when he had seduced from the paths of rectitude?

Yes—his heart was flint—he had never loved her save for the enjoyment of her person—he had triumphed in her rified charms—he had tasted the sweets of her virgin innocence—he had ruined her

for ever, and now he was about to destroy even the hopes that remained to cheer her!

But how was the fatal disclosure to be made?—how break the awful news to the ear of her who expected the words of felicity? Yet it must be done, thought Arnold; not a single sentiment of compunction restrained him—fear only for her sanity compelled him to commence cautiously and by degrees.

"My dear Emily—you declare that you love me so very much," he began; "what would you say if I were to leave you for six months—never come near you till the end of that period, and then hasten to your arms—could you support so long an absence, think you?"

"No—it would kill me, Stanley; and did I not know that you were jesting, I should faint at the very idea."

"What—are you so weak, dear Emily, that you could not support the temporary misfortunes of life?" asked Arnold.

"Indeed, my nerves are quite strong enough to endure the common miseries of this world; but were I to be informed that my beloved one had died,—had left me—had proved faithless—Oh! Stanley, I could not bear up against ~~that~~—the calamity would overwhelm me—would crush me into the grave!"

"You are not confident in your own powers,—your own energies," continued the wily deceiver.

"But why these questions, since my nerves will never be put to the trial you mention?" enquired Emily, gazing fondly in the face of the seducer.

"Because—do not be alarmed, dearest one—I have some unfavourable news to tell you—and would gradually—"

"Speak—speak, for God's sake!" cried the agonized girl. "Has my mother refused her consent? Then I will hasten to her—throw myself at her feet," continued she almost frantic—"bathe her hand with my tears—implore her not to seal my misery; and if that will not do, then"—she added bitterly—"I will confess all—my shame my disgrace—I will demand her as a duty to allow me the only means of covering my dishonour, of making me happy—for I find that men enjoy the pleasure, while we, poor defenceless beings, are laden with the stigma, and subject to the reproach!"

"And then if your mother were to refuse?"

"She could not—she would not—she dare not!" ejaculated Emily. "Let us go together, Stanley—let us join our entreaties—how could she resist them?"

"That is useless, my love," said Arnold.

"Useless—oh! no!—Recollect that I deserve you—remember that I have given myself up to your disposal," proceeded the poor girl, distractedly, for she felt a sad presentiment of evil: "reflect on your promise, that if my mother denied her approval, we should be united clandestinely!—Oh! Stanley, I am myself worthy of your love,—I love—I adore you—I respect you—I could, lay down my feeble existence for your benefit!"

And as she uttered these words quickly, a violent flood of tears denoted her grief, as her head reclined on his shoulder.

He was startled—he had not well calculated her powers—he had deemed her stronger than she really was; or rather he had underrated the extent of her affection for him. Still

cost what it would, he was resolved to undeceive her that evening, and yet so arrange it, if possible, that a faint hope might remain to prevent her from holding correspondence on the subject with her mother.

"Cease, cease these tears—this nonsense—Emily," he exclaimed: "what are we mortals born for, but to misery—to misfortune? Look at that young Hunter—he endeavours to struggle against his passion!"

"And must I also? do you mean to deceive me, Arnold? If you do—if your intentions be not honourable—Oh! God—my brain whirls—I shall become distracted, unless I know the whole!"

"Emily, I love you—love you as tenderly as I can: but—"

"But what—speak—anything is better than suspense!" cried she, partially nerving herself to hear some dreadful disclosure, fatal to her happiness.

"Present circumstances, dear girl—only present ones, prevent our union."

"And what are they? why should you have secrets from your Emily?" she demanded in a suffocating tone.

"Because they are of a nature——"

"That you cannot disclose them. Now, Stanley, I am fearful—something tells me this is an excuse: but let me know the worst—you have amply prepared me," continued she, wiping her eyes, though an expression of despair pervaded her countenance:—"yes—you have amply prepared me to hear all!"

"It is no excuse:—hope for the best, sweetest girl," returned Arnold, as a sudden idea prompted him how to inspire hopes of future happiness to soothe Emily, and by which he could account for his treacherous conduct at least for a time. "Six or seven months will soon glide away," he continued, as he kissed the cheek that was pale with sorrow.

"Oh! then you are indeed the tender being I took you for," exclaimed she, relapsing into fondness, and catching at a straw. "I thought you could not deceive me—I knew you would not leave me to despair!"

"Listen, and you will find that I am inventing no vain excuse. Your mother has promised that in six months from this period, we shall be united!"

This was the impudent falsehood the vile betrayer of innocence dared to utter.

"Then you can come and see me, dear Stanley?" asked Emily, now recovering herself, and deriving consolation from her lover's assertion.

"That is impossible. Your mother has determined to try our affection—she forbids us to communicate with each other till the interdicted time has expired."

"But you can write to me, Arnold?"

"Yes—although she forbade that also. And now, my dearest Emily, you must keep secret all that I have told you: your mother insisted upon hearing nothing about the matter from either of us, until——"

"The six months shall have passed. I promise you never to mention it in any of my letters:—she doubtless has good reasons for thus behaving towards me."

"And believe me, Emily, that I am as wretched as yourself; but we find that necessity has no law—no ruler. I love—and can yet restrain the ebullitions of my woe."

"Then you are also afflicted—you are also sad? Are you very sure that this delay will not estrange you from your poor Emily, Stanley? are you confident that a lovelier face——"

"That were impossible—I swear eternal fidelity: pacify yourself—for, to-morrow I must return to London," interrupted Arnold.

"God help me, then! Since you were here last I have almost died of suspense: now for six months!" cried Emily in a sorrowful voice, although Arnold's falsehood had greatly consoled her.

She ceased to fear his treachery—she only grieved for their separation!

"Mention not the horrid period—we must both support it! Let me kiss away your tears;"—and he embraced her tenderly.

She clung to him, as if it were for the last time—and her heart beat quickly:—they lingered long in each other's embrace, and enjoyed the tender dalliance of love's delights.

CHAPTER XIX.

Let glittering fops in courts be great,
For pay let armies move;
Beauty shall have no other bait
But gentle vows and love.

LORD LANSDOWNE.

We left Captain Stewart in a most dangerous condition, at Hounslow.

It was not altogether his forbidden attachment to Catherine that had cast him nearly upon the bed of death: it was the rapidly consecutive excitement of his duel with Sir George Mornay—his conversation with his father on the same day, when the bright anticipation that first cheered him, was suddenly dispelled by the decision of his parent—then the hasty ride to Hounslow—the feverish night he passed—the refusal of admittance on the following morning at Mrs. Crawford's house, to which he went for consolation—and the heated state of his blood, arising from violent exercise; for he had ridden with the speed of a Bedouin robber—'twas all this complicated string of events that had produced the fever whose rage seemed at first to threaten the most lamentable consequences.

In five or six days, however, he was much better, though still excessively languid and feeble. His cheek was ashy pale—his hand emaciated—and his eyes had partially lost their brightness. His beautiful hair had suffered under the scissors of the ruthless surgeon, who nevertheless saw the necessity of sacrificing those flowing locks. A melancholy expression of countenance evinced mental inquietude, notwithstanding that when he reflected upon all that had passed, he could not help feeling his pride wounded by the repulsive manner in which he was treated at the cottage.

He, whose prospects were so brilliant, and whose fortune was so ample—whose rank and social position entitled him to soar so high in his search for a partner for life—he had fixed his eyes upon an obscure girl, had hazarded his existence to vindicate the reputation of her family, and had then been treated with contempt! It was true that Mrs. Crawford did not probably know of the duel—it was equally true that he was unaware of the motives that influenced her conduct in declining the honour of his future visits. His good sense told him he ought not to judge hastily: his love whispered slyly in his ear, that misre-

presentation or slanderous tongues might have done him wrong in the opinion of those whose esteem he was so zealous to preserve.

Then Catherine, he remembered, was so lovely, so fair, so innocent! There was such magic grace in all her attitudes, while every motion was unstudied—there was such soft persuasion in all her words, though every sentiment was the emanation of purity, capable of no sinister design; and her disposition was as lively, her spirits naturally as buoyant as the sportive bird in the green woods, singing cheerily to its offspring! Moreover, she had not been imbued with the worldly notions prevalent amongst the inmates of boarding-schools—she had been brought up at home under the tuition of a tender parent, who was competent to instruct and rear in virtue the delicate mind of her daughter. He knew that he was beloved by this beautiful being—he knew that her heart was his. And then he reflected how proud would be his feelings in presenting to the world—to the admiration of his friends—a wife whose very appearance would bid the eye of the libertine grow dim, as when we gaze on the overwhelming lustre of the god of day. Fit to adorn the dwellings of princes, if that be deemed an honour, Catherine seemed to him!

He therefore, like the generality of lovers, determined to prosecute his suit—to obtain an explanation in some way or another for the grounds of Mrs. Crawford's strange conduct—and to importune his father till he granted his assent to the match. The surgeon had written to acquaint Lord Fanmore of William's speedy approach to convalescence; and that nobleman was in consequence hourly expected to congratulate the son whom he really loved.

Lord Fanmore arrived a few hours after he had received the letter, and was delighted to find his son so much better.

"Why, you young rogue, you," said he, "what uneasiness you have managed to cause your old father, with your love-illness.—God bless me! I was young once myself; but I never made such a fool of—"

"Because you were never sincerely attached to a delightful creature, whose heart is devoted inseparably to the object she adores," interrupted Stewart.

"Pretty style, this—object she adores—light of her eyes—darling of her bosom—pleasant language, that, my boy; you may hear it any time in every week of your existence—at the theatre. Why, you have read idle romances so long, that your head is quite turned, I declare! What book did you read last?"

"I forget—but do not think my affection for Miss Crawford is a foolish one," returned the Captain; "it is so deeply rooted in my heart, that if you will not allow me to consult my own happiness, I cannot answer for the consequences."

"Happy or miserable for life! Well, we must think of it, my boy—aye? Now I see your eyes brighten, and a little colour come to your cheek. Really, dear William, if I had thought I should have distressed you thus, I would not have been so harsh."

"Then you are my good father once more; for had you only given me the slightest hope the other day, it would have saved me this illness. Look to what I am reduced—"

A drop stood in Lord Fanmore's eye: he was a

kind man in his heart, although his disposition was rough.

He took his son's hand—the tear dropped upon it.

"By God! William Leo Alfred Stewart—how I love that name!—I will indulge you. Now listen to my words. I will allow you," he proceeded slowly, while the invalid's curiosity was extreme, "a year to consider: if at the end of that period.—But wait a moment—an idea has struck me!" exclaimed the nobleman; I will call and see this young lady myself!"

"Do, I implore you," cried Stewart, delighted with the proposition. "You will find her worthy the hand of a monarch.—you will see the most lovely—the most amiable—the most innocent girl in the world!"

"Enough of that; if she is all you represent her, I shall indulge your foolish passion, as I said just now."

Lord Fanmore accordingly ordered his carriage, which was soon got ready. He stepped into it; and having already made himself acquainted with the exact locality of Mrs. Crawford's cottage, he directed the coachman to drive thither.

During the ride he thought to himself, in the vain empty pride of his heart, that if he blazed in all the splendour of his rank, like Jove visiting a Semele, upon the ladies he was about to encounter, they would be so overwhelmed by his presence, that he would have no opportunity of forming a just estimate of Miss Catherine's mental qualifications. He therefore determined to pass himself off at first as a private individual, inventing a suitable excuse for his intrusion; and then, when he had stayed as long as he chose, to astonish them, and make them feel their own nothingness, by a declaration of his titled name. Never was there in the world, he thought, so splendid an idea as this!

Presently the handsome equipage drew up to the gate:—the nobleman alighted from the vehicle, opened the little wicket-entrance to the garden, and pompously strutted up the walk towards the house.

Just as he was about to give a thundering and important knock, the front door opened, and Arnold issued forth.

Lord Fanmore and he instantly recognized each other: the pretended benefactor of the Crawford family drew the nobleman aside from under the windows, and conversed some time with him in a low voice.

They then returned to the cottage, and were shown by Arnold's direction to the drawing-room, where Catherine was sitting in a melancholy mood before her harp:—but her fingers touched it not—she was dreaming of Stewart.

Mrs. Crawford was reclining upon a sofa, contemplating with acute anguish the pensive looks of her beloved daughter.

Arnold had been with them upwards of an hour:—it was now two o'clock in the afternoon. Their astonishment had been excited by witnessing a magnificent carriage, drawn by four bay horses in excellent condition, stop at their gate. Arnold, however, recognized it immediately, and without saying a word, hurried down to discover what could be the meaning of the nobleman's appearance in that quarter of the world; for it appeared he was acquainted with Lord Fanmore.

Arnold now re-entered the room, and begged to introduce a friend of his, Mr. Cuthbert, who had called to enquire if James were at home. Lord Fanmore—for it was he, of course—bowed politely, and was instantly struck by the beauty of Catherine. When they were all seated, he addressed Mrs. Crawford, in order to excuse his intrusion.

"I am acquainted, madam," said he, "with your son, Mr. Crawford—I met him in London some time ago, and was presented to him by my friend, Mr. Ar—Arnold. I promised to call some day at the residence of his family, where I expected to find him at present: you understand me madam, I hope," were the conclusive words of this lame excuse.

"Perfectly, Sir—and I am much obliged for your politeness," returned Mrs. Crawford. "My son, however, is not at home, being still in London with the kind benefactor who has adopted him."

"Ah!" proceeded the feigned Mr. Cuthbert, "he'll be amazingly rich one of these days, if he only manages well, the young rogue!—I believe that is your daughter Miss, Catherine madam—is it not?"

Mrs. Crawford bowed an affirmative.

"Oh! oh! Well, Miss Catherine—how do you manage to amuse yourself in this somewhat solitary spot?"

"I have my mother always as a companion, Sir; I have my books, my flowers, my music,—then, if I be wearied by those recreations, I have my pencil," replied the amiable girl, blushing, she knew not why.

Lord Fanmore was certainly enchanted with her: the sweetness of her voice melted his harsh resolves in an instant.

"And will you favour me, my love," continued he, "with one of those bewitching airs which I dare say you can warble so well?"

Mrs. Crawford looked annoyed; but supposing "Mr. Cuthbert" to be a friend of Arnold, she remained silent. Arnold gave her a sign which reassured her:—it was equivalent to saying, "This is his manner—he means no harm."

"Oh! Sir—I cannot sing before strangers—I am really very sorry to be obliged to refuse you—but this morning—" murmured the poor girl, endeavouring to invent an apology.

"Why, you little fool," returned Lord Fanmore, forgetting himself and his borrowed character, while Catherine seemed quite bewildered, "in my house people always obey me directly—or else—"

"But you will be pleased to recollect, Sir," interrupted Mrs. Crawford mildly, "that this is not your house."

"Oh! ah! I forgot—excuse me, my dear madam."

"Yes, Mrs. Crawford will excuse you, as well as Miss Catherine," said Arnold; "they must be made aware of your eccentric manners, Cuthbert."

"Indeed, I think so too," added that gentleman; "you are right, my dear Mr. Ar—Arnold—Arnold—that's it—the devil take your name—I never remember names that are not—"*aristocratic* he was going to say; but checking himself, he supplied the place of that epithet with the less ludicrous one of *easy*. "And so,

Miss Catherine, you are content to vegetate here with your books, your flowers, your harp, and your—what was the other amusement? Oh! a lover, I suppose. Ah! ah!" said his lordship, chuckling.

Mrs. Crawford could endure this no longer: Catherine burst into tears—those last words of Lord Fanmore's question recalled the image of Stewart more forcibly to her memory. The nobleman was himself affected:—he saw that the innocent girl suffered from his unfeeling remark—he was convinced of her love for his son—he discovered nothing objectionable in her, save the two principal glaring defects he was already aware of; viz. want of title, or relationship to rank, and deficiency of Christian nomenclature. But his heart was softened—his conscience told him that he had no right to insult the feelings of any human being, by allusion to the cause of their sorrows.

He rose hastily, and took the maiden's hand.

"Catherine," said he, I ask your pardon!—Come, wipe your pretty black eyes, my child: you are in love with my son, William,—and at the expiration—"

"Your son, Sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Crawford. "What means this?—But pray explain yourself!"

"That explanation is speedily given," returned the nobleman in ostentatious triumph: "my name is no more Cuthbert—'tis an aristocratic name, however—than your's:—I am Henry Felix Julian Stewart, Lord Fanmore, *et cetera, et cetera!*"

While with pompous voice, and grand emphasis he uttered these awfully sounding syllables of rank, Mrs. Crawford's blood flew to her face, for she remembered the brutal epistle he had sent her on a certain occasion. Instead of being reduced to ashes, or at least overwhelmed, as the poor nobleman had anticipated, she commenced a firm but lady-like rebuke, in respect to that letter.

"It is my way, my dear madam, to express myself harshly," said Lord Fanmore. "I wrote the thing when I was angry. You must forgive me—and you, my little Kate, will you forgive me as well? for there's poor William lying at the point of death, while I am chattering here."

"At the point of death!" ejaculated Catherine wildly, as she sank upon the chair, from which she had risen on the disclosure of Lord Fanmore's name.

"Not exactly at the point of death—he is nearly well now—Lord God! what mistakes I make every minute. But will you not assist me, Sir—that is, Mr. Arnold?" asked the perplexed nobleman.

Arnold was somewhat astonished at this scene. He was also annoyed and alarmed; for his plans did not accord with the prospect of so many persons who were acquainted with him, calling at Mrs. Crawford's house—a circumstance which he knew must take place, if there were any engagement between Lord Fanmore's son and Catherine. He however said but little, being anxiously occupied in noticing all that passed, and trusting to the fertility of his brain to circumvent any scheme that did not meet with his approbation.

Meantime Catherine had recovered herself

when she heard that Stewart was now nearly convalescent ; and Mrs. Crawford, guided by the interest of her family, accepted Lord Fanmore's apologies.

"Now I tell you what it is, Mrs. Crawford," said that nobleman : "I was at first determined my son should never be united to your pretty daughter—don't blush, Kate, you silly girl ; for that was my resolve before I had seen you, remember, and when I only knew your want of Christian names. However," proceeded he, addressing himself to the mother, "my son fell ill the day after I penned that cursed letter, so full of severity : he is at this moment at Hounslow barracks, but aware of my intention to pay the present visit. My object was to become acquainted with the family whom he esteemed, without revealing myself immediately. I am perfectly pleased with Kate, and only wish she had a title, with a few good names. How beautiful would she be as Miss Seraphina Selina Louisa Crawford ! My wish is, nevertheless, that no engagement should take place between the young people for the space of twelve months. If at the end of that time, they are still inclined towards each other, let them marry, and I will give my free consent. I will also settle a handsome property on my boy, and will not attempt to thwart his wishes. Are you satisfied ?"

"Oh ! my lord," exclaimed Catherine, delighted at such welcome news : but she stopped short, having uttered these few words almost involuntarily.

"Your wishes meet mine, my lord," Mrs. Crawford began ; "and I entirely approve—"

"You mean my wishes *direct* your's of course, madam : I know what you mean perfectly. Go on," said Lord Fanmore.

"I have merely to observe that your suggestions are perfectly acceptable, my lord," continued Mrs. Crawford.

"Without a doubt ! Who could have thought otherwise ?" demanded Lord Fanmore, wondering that Mrs. Crawford should or a moment even appear to question his right to dictate to her, that she should signify her consent, or her dissent.

The now happy mother of the equally happy Catherine saw the nobleman's failing, and was too much delighted with the arrangement that had been effected to irritate him by a trivial cavilling. He then rose to depart, refusing to take any refreshment on account of his desire to return directly to his son at Hounslow. After having shaken the fingers of Mrs. Crawford, and the hand of Catherine, he hastened to his carriage in company with Arnold, to whom he offered a seat. That individual, however, declined it, alleging as an excuse that he had his horse with him. He then took leave of Lord Fanmore, and re-entered the cottage, where Mrs. Crawford reproached him playfully for being accessory to the nobleman's stratagem of obtaining an introduction to the family under a feigned name. The wily deceiver pretended to be rejoiced at the "happy event," as he hypocritically termed the arrangement made by Stewart's father regarding the marriage, although in his own mind he saw many reasons to induce him to use his influence to prevent the match. Whatever were his motives—whatever were his intentions—he carefully concealed them, and soon bade the delighted mother and daughter adieu, to return to London.

Meanwhile Lord Fanmore hastened back to his son, and rendered him perfectly happy by detailing all that had taken place at the dwelling of Mrs. Crawford. The nobleman artfully advised him to pass as much of his time with Catherine as possible, when he should have recovered from his illness, and to repair to the cottage whenever his duty would permit ; for his lordship thought to himself that in a few weeks Stewart would be wearied of the beautiful maiden's company. He stayed that day to dine with the officers of the regiment at their mess, and on the following morning took leave of his son, and returned to London.

Stewart was now without a care ; and his health amended rapidly. The colour came to his cheek ; and in a few days he was enabled to write a letter to Catherine, enclosed in one to her mother.

The contents of the former were naturally replete with the words of affection—those of the latter with terms of gratitude and respect.

His father had made him acquainted with the nature of the letter he had so hastily written to Mrs. Crawford ; and Stewart was therefore enabled to comprehend the reasons of that lady's conduct in refusing to admit him the last time he called. He accordingly said many kind things in his letter by way of apology for Lord Fanmore's roughness.

In the course of a week, the surgeon permitted him to repair to the dwelling near Bagshot : but he went in his carriage, being too feeble to ride on horseback. A tear stood in Catherine's eye, when she noticed the change that had taken place in his appearance. They nevertheless embraced tenderly :—it was the first time—Catherine blushed deeply—but Mrs. Crawford did not feel offended at this token of attachment between the young lovers ; for she considered Stewart in the same light, as if he were really engaged by solemn vows to her daughter, so sincere did she deem his passion for that deserving girl to be.

"I would that James were at home at this moment, to be introduced to you, Captain Stewart," said Mrs. Crawford. "But perhaps he is better where he is at the moment, if we be selfish enough to regard our own interest ; for if report and his sanguine hopes speak true, Mr. Fitzgerald, who has already adopted him, may enrich us all for life."

"I would not build too highly upon those anticipations," remarked Stewart. "Rich as Mr. Fitzgerald may be, misers are ever capricious."

"I have heard Mr. Arnold say, mamma, that too much wealth is a dangerous possession," observed Catherine ; for Arnold occasionally dropped a moral maxim, to cover with a deeper veil of hypocrisy the villany that lurked in his bosom.

"Yes," said Stewart sincerely : "Catherine is right—or rather this Mr. Arnold—"

"Who is a valued friend," interrupted Mrs. Crawford, "to whom we must introduce you. He is almost a brother or uncle to my children—and a disinterested disposition endears him to us. We became acquainted with him in nearly as singular a manner as with yourself. One day my son James was sent by me to London, to make enquiries concerning a distressing event—his poor father's disappearance," faltered Mrs. Crawford, wiping away a tear from her eye. "After vain and fruitless researches, and after having been denied admittance to the house of Sir George.

Mornay, he wrote to ask for instructions how to act. I requested him to return home immediately. He travelled on horseback by night—I have always indulged him by keeping him a horse, since he was twelve years old; it is very little expense here in the country. On the road he was attacked by robbers. Two highwaymen were about to rifle him, when suddenly a traveller rode up, and rescued him. This was Mr. Arnold, who was returning to London from Hounslow. On the following morning, Mr. Arnold called to enquire after James, and was of course well received as the deliverer of my only son. We were then in danger of being involved in the deepest pecuniary embarrassments, Captain Stewart; for my husband's income perished with him. I wrote several times to Sir George Mornay, and gained nothing for my useless pains. But Mr. Arnold said that he was acquainted with the baronet, and offered to use his influence. He wrote but one letter, and a quarterly allowance was immediately promised: it has been regularly paid ever since. Various other kind acts has Mr. Arnold done us; and I shall ever remember him with the utmost gratitude."

"You spoke of Sir George Mornay," said William: "I must now relate an adventure I had with him lately, as I dare say you see the newspapers but seldom in this part of the world."

Stewart then detailed the narrative of the duel, suppressing from motives of delicacy, the exact origin, as well as the preliminary arrangements he had made regarding his property. Catherine's colour went and came quickly, varying according to the different specific steps that were taken from the moment of the dispute to the conclusion of the meeting: and when her lover ended his narrative by stating that the duel was bloodless, her eyes beamed with the light of satisfaction.

"Although he be your benefactor in some way," remarked Stewart, "I dislike that same Sir George Mornay. His character, I believe, if not exactly impeachable, is far from being what an honest man would envy. He is a mysterious being, without feeling, without remorse for the way in which he has treated his wife, who was obliged to separate from him. Where she now is, God knows: he made over to her some considerable sum in funded property, when they signed the agreements of separation; and that fact materially impoverished his then already straightened resources. He never was well off; and how he now keeps up appearances it is impossible to say. He has two establishments—one in Portland-place, and another at Kensington or Hammersmith, I forget which. This is all I know, ladies, concerning him whom you fear, but whom you have never seen."

We need not dwell farther upon the conversation which passed on this occasion: suffice it to say that the time glided rapidly and happily away, and that when the hour arrived for the young officer to return to Hounslow, he separated not from the gentle Catherine without having given and elicited promises of eternal fidelity.

CHAPTER XX.

Her purity was menaced—her fair fame
Hung on the verge of ruin—and her honour
Was as it were in the seducer's grasp,
When——

JACOBS.

It is the pleasing mission of him who would give

you "truth in fairy fiction dressed,"—the truth, be it of scene or situation—of character, incident, or group—to picture the variegated whole as marked and stamped by him in his unobtrusive peregrinations among his race, or as studied, by the aids of reflected lights in the privacy of his habitation.

While employed in such a task, it will be his lot to bring out some cheering gleams from the gloomiest corners, as well as to descry dark tints in the brightest,—elicit wholesome teachings from the vilest, and show that although all appeareth to the unpractised eye and the unsearching and unbalancing mind to be utter confusion, yet that it is confusion regularly controuled and driven.

And if there be a more instructive and gratifying task than another for such a limner of life, surely it must be something not widely removed from what we are endeavouring fitly to perform, when constituting such a hero as Crawford both the painter and the preacher,—both the observed and the observer,—the subject, theme, and example in this our record of "The Youth's Career of Crime!"

James, by the time that he was fairly established in Conduit Street, had a keener glance, more penetrating views of mankind and the mazes of society, than nine tenths of those who have spent twenty years upon town, and who may generally be reckoned of the number of *knowing ones*. By nature amply, nay—greatly gifted both mentally and personally, nor left without effective sorts of schooling, he felt and practically found, as he began often to remark himself, that a man's age is not to be measured by the years during which he may have trod this footstool, but by the amount, the variety, the weight, and the intensity of his experience in regard to what he has done, suffered, and noted,—not according to the rate and bulk of a vegetative growth, but by the multitude and nature of his actions, perceptions and influences.

Now, James was resolved that he would turn to good account every waking hour of his existence. In fact, especially from the moment that he planted himself in Conduit Street, he daily, aye—and nightly, too, sought scenes of pleasure.

The objects eagerly contemplated by him, the crowd of his engagements, the rapidity of his transactions, the singularity of his adventures, never allowed a minute to be lost; or, if at any time caught with head resting on hand, his tongue silent, and his feet at repose, you might be sure that he was not indulging a dreamy and purposeless abstraction, but summoning up acute memories, or grasping at the imagined things of the coming periods.

One remark more, ere keeping close to his heels in his actual plans and paces from the moment that he so munificently and adroitly assisted young Maxwell and had his triumphant generosity bruited abroad. James Crawford now felt assured that there was immediately before him scope for an eventful—peradventure for a dashing and glorious career, at least for a season; and he was therefore determined that not an instant should be wasted uncramm'd with excitement, either as principal or coadjutor; either as actual schemer and performer himself, or as sympathising with other adepts; and though he had



almost at one bound, while but yet a stripling, leaped into the vortex of crime and its enslaving issues,—greatly misled by a subtle and perfectly trained leader—yet so much of but partially tainted principle and virtue remained,—so many touches of tenderness and conscience, that he had far more delight in contemplating the achievement of praiseworthy deeds than such as would be unredeemably depraved, and prompted by a merely wanton appetite for evil and wrong doing.

“Let me but realise the anticipated fruits of our magnificent scheme,” he would secretly cry, “and after that I shall earn, whatever be the spot where destiny may appoint for me, naught else but golden opinions.”

Ah! Crawford, your reservations are but ensnaring self-deception,—your resolves are no better than the stepping-stones to perdition!

Crawford became a frequent visitor at the

residence of the Maxwells. We have before said that Sophia was not of the order of beings that critics of feminine beauty would call faultlessly beautiful. There was hardly a feature of her face that might not be objected to: yet there was that charm about the whole—that harmonious grace of expression that all who began to criticise, stayed to wonder, declaring that in no one particular, could a change be made that would not mar the countenance, character, and contour.

Above all, it was when her eyes brightened with inward joy or a sudden gladsome thought, that Miss Maxwell was surpassingly lovely, should you scan her when silent and motionless. And yet she could be still more fascinatingly angelic; and this was at those moments when with the sweetest, most silver and melodious, voice that ever sounded, she gave utterance to her soul's enchantment. Oh! how subdued yet sweet and musical was her speech! Pity it was

is no love. I must, when I return back with you to your father's, bid you farewell for ever, if you really have a doubt of my loving you."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the young lady. "Forgive me, dear James: I know not what I said. Oh! do not speak of farewell."

"You ought to know, Sophia," said James, "that my affection for you is of such a nature that it will permit no doubts, — no reservations."

"I know it, James. Yes—yes, I know it. I rely on you and you only."

And she smiled, which was sufficient at the moment for Crawford, who though he loved her, and would not have deliberately wounded her feelings, was not too regardless of the pangs which smiles might cover.

After all, however, if it be as some female writer has said, that it is imprudent even in a wife to confess her deep devotion to her husband, how wrong and perilous in a young inexperienced maiden to disclose in such maudlin terms her affection for a wooer, however honourable may be his character and upright his motives.

By the time that the conversation had reached the point to which we have just brought it, the sky became troubled and overcast.

"There is a strange darkness gathering round us," said Miss Maxwell; "and we are a long way from the carriage—not even near any house."

"True," replied Crawford, looking inquiringly around him. "The clouds seem gathering for a storm. But it is perhaps after all only a transient shower; let us go farther amongst those trees."

And to an adjacent grove did they repair together, Sophia clinging to Crawford as if his protection would avail against the storm of heaven!

The delicious contact of the affrighted girl inflamed his blood; and casting his arms around her, he glued his mouth to her's. She did not attempt to withdraw her vermilion lips from those of her lover; and when his rude hand invaded the treasures of her bosom, and toyed with her in a manner that seemed to portend consequences fatal to her honour, her cheeks grew flushed and her eyes were half closed in soft voluptuous languor, as he pressed the snowy globes that heaved with the excitement of passion.

The increasing darkness seemed to favour the design of Crawford, and to augment the peril in which the maiden was placed. But suddenly a tremendous clap of thunder startled them;—and the forked lightning flashing to their very feet, and the peals booming and rattling above their heads in awful majesty, were enough to reach the fears of the daring hero of our tale.

Then suddenly he remembered how dangerous was their situation amongst the trees.

That thunder storm preserved the trembling maiden!

"Fear nothing, dear Sophia," cried James, in a kindlier tone than he had all along spoken; "the storm is passing over. Do you not hear that the thunder sounds more distant with each peal."

"God help us," cried Miss Maxwell.

"Hush—hush! all is well; the fury of the tempest is gone by."

The storm had indeed passed over. The thunder in the far distance sounded as if it had been the mutterings of some incensed giant that had retired to repose.

Sophia looked up; and flinging her arms round Crawford's neck, she burst into tears.

"Oh! James,—James," she cried, "it was terrible! What if that lightning had stricken you, James? I shudder at the thought."

"But, come now, cheer up, trembler; let me again see the colour in your cheeks, but this minute so blanched."

Sophia clung closer to Crawford, as if to reward him more fully for his gentler manner, leaning her head upon his shoulder.

"Come, dearest," he said, "we must hasten back to the carriage, or the servants will be alarmed at our absence."

And arm-in-arm they retraced their way to the vehicle.

CHAPTER XXI.

The private soldier is subject to a soul-crushing discipline, and often is treated as a brute rather than as a human being.

MARSHAL MARMONT.

"Fire! fire!"

HYDE PARK and its environs,—those lungs of the great metropolis,—were the frequent scenes of Crawford's perambulations, which, however, were seldom undertaken or pursued without an object, although we shall not at present inquire or asseverate how sinister and unworthy the motives might be. The assignments with Arnold alone in these localities, led to many an evening stroll thither. Besides, James was not without certain partialities relative to a military career, and liked to pass an hour now and then, whenever he might happen to have an opportunity of observing the evolutions, or parade of cavalry especially. Knightsbridge therefore, became familiar to him; and thither we must accompany our hero on the anniversary of one of Lord Wellington's most famous victories.

It was on the evening of such a day, when the troops had been reviewed, that Crawford was loitering in the vicinity now mentioned: for his better genius had on the occasion been awakened; and more seriously than was his wont did he contemplate certain of those regiments which have long been accounted the flower of the army. He was moved when he thought of the British colours that waved proudly in the breeze, floating beneath a branch of laurel that decked the staff; nor less did his heart sympathise with each soldier who might be beheld with a leaf of the never-fading emblem of triumph placed in his cap.

It was towards the evening, when an intoxicated trooper might be seen here or there staggering towards the barracks; and near the gates, as the time arrived for these being shut, might be observed certain of the more gay and youthful, walking till the last possible moment permitted, with their arms round the waists of the girls they loved.

Among the loiterers was the dashing yet brave Theodore Grantley. Scores of times he had said "good night," to the sweet and timid creature that now stood before him, weeping as he held her hand; but still he went not, and it seemed impossible for him to leave her.

The last man but one of the stragglers was now within the barracks. Theodore well knew the consequences of delaying, and when he heard the tramp of the piquet as it went its rounds, he

snatched a hasty kiss, exclaiming, "There's the piquet—I dare not tarry a moment longer."

"Oh, Theodore, Theodore!" cried the impassioned girl, "do not leave me!—one moment more!"

"I cannot—I dare not!" he ejaculated.

"Do you march to-morrow?" asked the sobbing maiden.

"We do," was the mournful reply.

"Ah! Theodore, you will leave and forget me."

"Never—never!" said the spirited soldier.

"Come, good night."

"Say—say, shall I go with you Theodore," she asked.

"Yes, my love, yes," hastily answered Theodore, as he tried to unwind the arms of the loving young creature that now clung to him. "I'll see you to-morrow—I'll see you to-morrow."

As he endeavoured to release himself from her embrace, the gate opened, and the piquet appeared.

"What's your number?" asked the sergeant.

"Fifty-two," replied Theodore.

"Could not you find your way to your quarters before now?" demanded the sergeant; "but you must stand wasting your time with a parcel of damned prostitutes."

The word had scarcely escaped his lips, when Theodore, who was not quite sober, and who was fearfully hurt at the language used towards one whom he truly loved, and whose soul was entirely pure, with a single blow felled the speaker to the ground. This was no sooner done, than the unfortunate dragoon saw his error; but it was too late. The sergeant rose and ordered the men to seize him; and the unhappy youth was accordingly conveyed within the barracks, leaving the dear one of his heart to weep without.

Next day a Court-martial was held; Theodore was found guilty, and doomed to be shot for the insubordination. Nor was the sentence sooner known than the most lively sympathy was expressed on his behalf, for Theodore was generous, humane, and brave; always the first at his post, did his duty well, was the model of a soldier, and this was his first offence.

Upon hearing of his sentence, James Crawford determined to visit the man whom all bewailed, and of whose parting conversation with the girl he had been, by chance, partly a hearer, as well as witness of the rash blow dealt to a superior. Accordingly, Crawford begged admittance to his prison, and found him about twenty-five, tall, and of an open, engaging manner. As the visitant advanced into the cell, the condemned rose, and received him without any awkward ceremony, saying:—

"Sir, I am happy to see you. A man's last moments are always subject for deep reflection."

"Indeed such moments are solemn," replied James; "and I hope you have made provision for the journey you are about to take."

"What is death," said Theodore, "if one be at peace with God, as I hope I am, but the mere alleviation of a sensitive mind—a release from care and trouble—an introduction to another and a better world? But, sir, I invite you to be present at my execution, that you may see how I die."

"Your courage, I learn, Theodore, has been well tried ere now: I wish it had been put to any other test than that of the present. Had your

death happened in the field of victory, it would have been, as in the case of General Moore, the most welcome, and the least lamented."

As Crawford mentioned this, the prisoner repeated some lines, in an enthusiastic manner, in praise of a soldier's death, in the hour of conflict on the battle field; and scarcely had he finished, when his captain entered the cell, exhorting him in the most friendly manner to appeal against the judgment of the Court-martial.

"I am much obliged, captain," said Theodore; "but I am not unaware of the enormity of my offence, or that the law punishes it with death; and I would undergo the sentence rather than have it commuted into imprisonment and chains, which would for ever brand me with infamy, and tarnish the honour of my family."

"He must be saved," said Crawford, emphatically.

"Our military laws are so strict and severe," observed the captain; "that it will be done with extreme difficulty. Indeed, I entertain a very slight hope,—a despairing idea relative to the possibility of his escape from condign punishment. Yet I would have him appeal. He must not, however, build confidence on the effort, but prepare to meet the Great Judge."

Enough had been said and suggested in the presence of Crawford during this hasty visit to the condemned—a sufficiency had been felt and witnessed by him when the prisoner committed the act of insubordination, to arm our hero with arguments and eloquence for the Commander-in-Chief's ear.

Accordingly, he flew to the Horse Guards, leaving not a tittle of what he had seen and heard unenforced and set in the best light. He announced who he himself was, according to the reputation that had of late followed him. He spoke of the noble-bearing and manly sentiments of Grantley, declaring that he should be proud at that very moment to hail him as a twin brother; and he doubted not if the sentence were commuted, that as soon as the unhappy man was released, he would be found to be an ornament to society.

The Commander-in-Chief was moved; he assured Crawford that a re-investigation should immediately be set on foot. The consequence was that a commutation of the sentence almost immediately took place; Crawford at a very cheap rate for himself, having saved the life of the condemned, and by this felicitous stroke of policy mightily added to his own fame,—the newspapers instantly catching the report of his intercession, and lending it many brilliant dashes unforeseen by the adept.

Not slightly elated by the manner of his reception at the Horse Guards, and the extremely favourable issue which promised to follow his efforts in behalf of the condemned dragoon, Crawford hied him towards Conduit-street. There was an unwonted elevation within him; and his gait was, if possible, more erect and towering than ever it had been. The consciousness of having, with the prospect of success, exerted himself in the cause of humanity,—albeit the feeling was not unmingled with the sense that he mainly looked forward to a selfish end and the accomplishment of a gross imposture, even when so eloquently bestirring himself to save from an ignominious death a fellow creature,—brought

the conviction somewhat touchingly home to his bosom, that, after all, the only gains worth struggling for were those which virtue and benevolence had in their train.

James, we say, strode forth and away from the presence of the Commander-in-Chief with something of that salient and lofty bearing which characterises the movements and attitudes of the genuine hero at the moment of his most glorious deeds. He felt his heart to be larger and warmer than before; his bosom panted as if swelling with unprecedented resolves; nor at the instant did it seem to him that any thing which was within the compass of man's honourable, daring, and actual performance, was beyond his achieving of it.

Hardly had he reasoned himself up to this pitch,—scarcely had he realised in his throbbing breast this persuasion,—being convinced of his gift of championship,—than the cry of "Fire, Fire!" smote upon his ear,—that cry which, especially at the dead of night, when one awakens from a deep sleep, makes the very hair of the head to participate in one's emotions, nerving with sudden inspiration to the boldest enterprise.

No sooner was the cry of "Fire! Fire!" heard by our hero, than he felt it revealed within him that there was a triumph immediately for his performance, and that he was about victoriously to contend against obstacles with which at any other time he must have regarded it as the madness of despair to attempt waging battle.

"Fire! Fire! the flames are making awful progress, and at least one female is at the mercy of the burning mass!" said an affrighted person in the street.

Crawford bounded to the spot, and from amid the dense cloud that enveloped the upper floors of the house, he heard woman's distracted cries for aid. A moment after,—a gust of wind partly dividing the murky volume, and partly by means of the vomited sheets of flame that flashed from the lower windows,—he descried the agonized creature, making as if to leap outright from her fearful position, where assuredly she would be dashed to pieces.

"Hold; hold!" he shouted; "wait but for a few seconds, and I shall save you!"

The crowd was cleft open by James's sturdy arm. The firemen, who were already retiring from the main door and driven from the staircase by the belated gust of fire which thence encountered them, said, "Are you mad? are you intent on suicide?" but they offered no other opposition—they were amazed at our hero's resolute calmness.

A moment more, and he disappeared.

The shrieks of the woman, the crackling of kindled timbers, and the voice of the raging element, were alone now for a short space heard, every one holding in his breath as if to behold a miracle, or rather to witness a self-immolation,—as Crawford dived into the doomed tenement.

But hardly was he lost sight of, when the screams of the multitude were resumed,—some imploring the female to retain her position an instant longer, for that she may be rescued,—others asseverating that the adventurous youth must himself be destroyed!

While these discordant cries were adding horrors to the appalling scene, lo! a glimpse of a

figure emerging from the attic was caught, and a minute afterwards the intrepid young man was seen swinging a noosed rope from the parapet towards the window where the female had been standing.

"In the name of heaven," Crawford repeatedly cried, "entrust yourself to the cord by placing it round your waist, and I shall bear you aloft."

But there was no response,—nothing attempted in obedience to the instruction!

Every moment was James placing himself in the most imminent peril, were it but by longer remaining on the roof. The screams from the crowd, too, became more and more urgent for him to look to himself, since "the woman must be dead." Still his nerve faltered not—his arm was not weakened,—his resolution had been taken.

Fastening one end of the cord to where he stood, he entrusted his weight to the tackle, and dropped down to the window immediately beneath; there he again disappeared, like one on the most eager and persevering search. More dreadful now was the suspense of the people than it had yet been.

The flames were raving and roaring louder and louder; larger and fiercer volumes were gushing from the windows, while from the myriads of sparks that followed every crash, it was manifest that partitions and the more slender portions of the house were falling in masses.

Terrific sight! tremendous condition to be within the very jaws of the devouring fire,—of that which hath no pity, but whose incessant cry is, "Give me more! more!"

Once again voices exclaimed, "A figure issues from the roof!"

Blessed be heaven! the report was true, and a shout of joy rent the air,—a shout prolonged and rapturously uttered, blended with vociferous cheering, as Crawford was plainly beheld to be bearing over his left shoulder a female form, but who was either dead, or bereft of all consciousness, he the while making speed to escape from the licking flames that flashed at his very heels. An effort more—and he mastered the intervening gable which formidably appeared itself between the doomed dwelling and the adjacent tenement.

It was achieved. The female was saved, and brought to herself,—James descending to the people who had been witnesses of his almost unprecedented valour and prowess, now to be received with an exulting welcome and exuberant applause.

"It is Crawford!" suddenly was resounded through the crowd; "it is the adopted son of the old miser Fitzgerald!"

"The same! the same," many voices repeated; "the heir to the largest fortune in England, but now a greater man than had he been born to a principedom!"

In short, nothing would do but that he must be borne, shoulder high, to his home by sundry young gentlemen who gathered round; and had it not been that he complained of an injury which his left arm had a few minutes before sustained, while performing his astonishing achievement, doubtless they would have been as good as their word. As it was, however, the first carriage that came in sight was incontinently seized upon in order that our hero might have a triumphant car: and, this happening to be no other than

Lord Montjoys,—himself and lady at the time the occupants—these noble personages had the honour, as soon as the horses were unyoked, of being drawn by scores of hearty hands along with Crawford, to Conduit-street.

What now shall be said of Arnold's ready and proficient pupil? Ah! James had the archangel been commissioned on the morning when thou didst pay thy visit to the cell of the condemned dragoon; on the day when thou didst thence speed thee to the Commander-in-chief,—and still better, to speak after the manner of men—at the hour when thou didst achieve thy mighty and courageous exploit at the fire,—to rescue thy soul from perdition, as a brand from the burning, the epoch would have been a grand one in thy history!

Or hadst thou fallen a victim to the enterprise amid the raging flames, and failed of saving the helpless maiden from the fury of the fiery element, both being consumed and never more recognised to be of human proportions, the world would not have visited thy name with execrations, and thou mightst have lived in the grateful memories of the generous and the good!

But, alas! when the spirit of God seemed to strive with thy spirit in the most resistless way, thou wast hardy enough to bid defiance, to the benign visitant; and thus was thou doomed to be left to the dark, unredeemed devices of thine own deprived and hell invoking heart.

CHAPTER XXII.

And Juan sate with Julia half embraced,
And half retiring from the glowing arm,
Which trembled like the bosom where 'twas placed.
BYRON.

JAMES CRAWFORD lost no time in devising how he should best turn to account his very recent triumphs, especially with the expectant and honour-courting Maxwells. James's cogitations were rapid—his contrivances prompt.

"I shall not pay them a visit to-day, but write a note to say that pressing matters of business occupy my venerable friend and benefactor—so that I am particularly needed. Not a word from me about my intercession for the trooper, or my exploit at the fire; for of these fortunate events I shall take good care to have the most taking relation that can be drawn up put into to-morrow's papers, where the whole is sure to meet the old merchant's eyes, ever so eager for news which may come within the scope of his ambitious schemes. The whole of to-day's luck must then and thus tell ten-fold more favourably, than were I to be the forward trumpeter of my own happy enterprises and achievements. Oh! I shall have everything my own way with these blind and purse-proud cockneys!—there is no saying where my luck in that quarter may end!"

All this and a good deal more was speedily meditated and mapped out by the fertile brain of our hero; and all that he contemplated and resolved on, promised to have an ample realization. The newspaper paragraphs were prepared, and transmitted to the various leading journals, couched of course, in the most flattering terms, at the same time having facts, and actual events as they have been narrated above, for a foundation.

Indeed, the only decidedly unauthorized particulars which appeared in the story of Crawford's

opportune services in behalf of the condemned trooper, and in the rescue at the fire, consisted of those where it was said, that the Secretary of State for the Home Department was understood to have already forwarded some highly expressive tokens of his sense of our hero's public services,—nay, that the Sovereign himself had signified his wish for the young gentleman to be introduced at Court, "where, no doubt, Mr. Crawford's merits would be duly appreciated."

The day, so apparently auspicious for Crawford and his accomplices, passed; the night that immediately followed went by also—his soul all the while exulting at his glorious prospects; for even in his dreams he roamed in a world of unparalleled grandeur and joy.

The morning sun awoke him at rather a late hour, with gorgeous saluting beams; and he lost no space in descending, dressed for the day, to the breakfast-room; for he was full of expectancy, big with hope, revelling amid the extravagant and magnificent creations of his over-strained imagination.

"If," said he, "the day that has last gone, were crowded for me with as much of the extraordinary as would form a rich dramatic plot,—23 would fill up the story of the half of many a man's existence; above all, revealing to me that there dwell within myself untold of resources and the most splendid masteries, no matter when, where, or whence, the call for their exercise—if all this were the realization of yesterday, it is equally true that this morning my heart pants as it never hitherto was felt to do, with the assurance that fruition ineffably undefined, is within my grasp—that there is naught that I can long for, fondly meditate on, or picture to myself, as desirable for the twenty-four hours that are first to speed away, which shall not be mine."

Hardly had James arrived at this soul-gratifying conclusion, when up drove the Maxwells—father, mother, and daughter,—for the son was on a mercantile mission to the provinces. A moment after, the visitants were almost smothering our hero with their caresses, and deafening him with their adulation. In fact they praises savoured of worship,—the money-loving merchant, the match-making merchant's spouse, and the amorous Sophia, bestowing each, in a characteristic manner, the most fulsome devotion.

Nor was Fitzgerald allowed to go without having his portion in this ecstatic scene; for when the Maxwells pressed in a way which admitted of no denial, that Crawford should accompany them home, there to spend the day,—Mr. Maxwell declaring that he had something of a special and important nature, to discuss with his young friend—the old impostor, while professing a fear lest they should spoil his adopted son by kindness, besides putting him in a track that might trench too sharply upon his pocket-money, acquiesced; not, however, on quitting the room, without taking James by the button and whispering a lesson of miserly economy.

The reader has already been sufficiently made acquainted with Miss Maxwell's general character and her style of beauty. The circulating library, accommodating servants, warmth of constitution, and an abandonment to herself, had allowed this tender plant, like an unprisoned tree, to put forth the most undirected luxuriance of growth—to lose herself amidst the weeds of a

spurious, untaming literature, fastening upon the specious flowers of description and flashes of impassioned fancy.

Her father too, has been described sufficiently to leave the reader aware that he was ambitious and avaricious: consistently enough with his character, were the questionings which he set on foot the moment he had Crawford at his residence.

"It is all in pure confidence and strict privacy that I take it upon myself to make some enquiries respecting your means—your allowances rather, afforded by Mr. Fitzgerald towards a proper position and display before the great and exacting world. I fear you are rather stingily supplied, and this notion has been strengthened by the mode in which the venerable and careful old gentleman spoke a little while ago. Pray, may I ask what was the nature of his injunctions—of his short lecture ere now?"

"Oh! yes," answered Crawford; "I can have no secrets towards you. Would you have surmised it! He insists that I abridge even my present very limited expenditure;—nay, he seems to hint that I should sell my noble horse in order to save some twenty-five or thirty shillings per week. I must not run counter to his views."

"This brings us to the very point which I wished to broach, but to your own ear alone, this morning," said the glad merchant, rubbing his hands together in huge delight that he should have an opportunity of profitably advancing a sum of money to the high-souled and adopted heir of hundreds of thousands,—the son-in-law unquestionably to be.

James upon this spoke with diffidence and a considerate caution to all appearance, naming a small sum.

"Nonsense," quoth the merchant, "say four or five thousand at once. In all probability you will make it see Mr. Fitzgerald out, and then we shall speak of the re-payment. The re-payment, ah! Sophia and you will then have to attend to the re-payment with interest, my boy."

In short a cheque for *five thousand pounds sterling* was instantly put into Crawford's hands.

As soon as Mr. Maxwell had hurried off to his counting-house, James was joined by the lovely and panting Sophia, to whose society he was enthusiastically consigned both by father and mother for the entire day; the injunction being peremptory that he was not to think of stirring from their mansion till long after dinner, seeing that Mr. Maxwell was compelled to feast at the Mansion House, along with the City Aristocracy.

To spend the whole day, James, in company alone, with the love sick and maudlin Miss Maxwell! How now about your anticipations of undefined and ineffable things being within your immediate clutch,—undreamed of fruition ere the lapse of the twenty-four hours! Surely the sphere for realising such exultation is limited,—truly it will be strange, if with such an associate and such appliances as are alone at hand in the money-making man's mansion, thou canst escape an intolerable ennui, or the unmitigated trifling and culpable waste which any one of fine powers and noble aspirations would necessarily experience and incur in such circumstances!

Reader! Crawford was not so much at a loss how to pass the time with Sophia, in the splendid-

ly furnished drawing-room of the merchant's dwelling, as you might suppose. They talked as lovers always do converse,—Sophia exacting vows and promises, and James willingly giving them.

But at last there was a dead silence,—a silence only as to words; for, while Sophia was clasped in his arms, their eyes spoke eloquently.

"A traitor's and a treacherous deed it were, poor fond, trusting maiden," said Crawford to himself, "to rifle thee, at a ruthless moment, of thy peace of mind and purity for ever. But temptation is more powerful than I, and unless I tear myself utterly away from thee, thou art, clinging one, doomed to fall. And I have sisters! Some perfidious man may at this moment be ensnaring sensitive Emily or beautiful Kate, sweet ampleton. Sulphurous hell to the villian! But what right to imprecate or curse hath he who meditates and perpetrates a like enormity? His proper office, though a brother of the despoiled, it cannot be to chastise the ruffian who works such havoc; nor would it be for him to look his widowed mother in the face any more, or offer to sustain her drooping head. Let the spirit bear the rod, and let the vile flesh shrink and be subservient."

These last words were spoken aloud, accompanied with a blow of the open palm, which he dealt to his own head.

This instantly recalled the dreamy senses of the impassioned maiden, when she, imploring, and with a still more claspng amorousness, entreated to know what troubled him. Without a syllable of reply, he untwined her arms, gently freeing himself from her embrace, and started to his feet, pacing the floor for some time as if to work himself to a resolute pitch.

But alas! he again threw himself upon the sofa, resigning himself to her caresses, ever the more anxious and warm, the longer she beheld the tumult of his soul. To pacing the floor he would once more suddenly betake himself, but as surely as before, he would return to the downy seat, and then to luxuriate in the sense of Sophia's soft pressures and feminine charms.

Thus, with these transitions, from sensual intoxication to awakened reflection, and from awakened reflection to sensual intoxication, hour after hour sped. Sophia's bliss must have been nearly complete, for such was her abandonment that she heeded not the discomposure of her ringlets: oft, indeed, her dishevelled hair veiling their dalliance, as she lay panting on his bosom, and closely kissing his lips.

But she was still innocent!

At a late period of the day, dinner was served up in a small apartment adjoining Mrs. Maxwell's bed-room; for she had early in the forenoon become indisposed, and could not comfortably leave her sleeping-chamber. By the arrangement mentioned, however, the young people could, without inconvenience, maintain a conversation with the lady, besides performing the little kindly offices which were required whilst they partook of the repast.

James drank the champagne and the other delicious wines freely; and he took care that Sophia should at least taste whatever sort he patronised,—taste and retaste again. She did so, and her eyes glistened the brighter, her love sparkled the higher: she actually looked, longed, and bore herself like to one in transports, James the while betraying kindred emotions and fervid fancies.

Twilight set in,—the shades of evening gathered round apace, and the youthful pair betook themselves to the drawing-room, where they might enjoy a perfect privacy,—the curtain of night, the absence of the merchant, and the position in which they were planted, being to the utmost of the heart's content that any amorous young person could desire.

Oh, yes,—here they resumed their intoxicating arts, accounting their delight seraphic. James had armed himself with a bottle of champagne, and he urged the maiden to sip of the nectar. She assented and was again in transports.

It was autumn—and, the weather delicious,—the night serene, the sky an untroubled expanse of the deepest blue, only variegated by the trembling stars. Oh! it was a night for love,—an ecstatic night; it was not for flesh and blood to continue longer unsated in any way.

They moved, still entwined, across the floor; whose impulse was the strongest and tenderest, we know not: a door opened to their touch; a corridor had to be traversed; and next they ushered themselves into a chamber, where the moonlight disclosed to Crawford's eye ample folds of drapery and massive curtain wreaths, with gilded cornices, and downy couch,—all fit for a royal nuptial pair. A moment more, and the snow-white arms of the maiden clasped him round,—those arms so delicate and plump that the pressure of a lip would dimple them!

And with even more ready yielding than Emily had shown when she surrendered herself to Arnold, did Sophia abandon her person—her honour—her charms to the youth whom she adored.

Nor when they retraced their way to the drawing-room, did she manifest that remorse—that bitter bemoaning for her weakness, which Crawford's own sister had evinced—and most sincerely evinced—after she had become the victim of Stanley Arnold.

It was late that night when Crawford returned to Conduit Street.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Adventures thickened on him.

GIL BLAS.

ONE morning when James returned from a visit at Mr. Maxwell's house, to his own dwelling in Conduit Street, he was informed by the servant that a gentleman had left his card for him an hour before, with a message that he would call again in the course of the day.

This was Captain Stewart.

James waited anxiously for his arrival, and would have given much for a draught of Lethean water to wash away from his memory the recollection of the robbery near Hounslow. There was however no help for it: he had become inured to crime, and an adept in playing the hypocrite to perfection; so that when the young officer was shown into the handsome parlour where he waited for him, he assumed the unblushing front which conscious innocence would have worn.

Stewart took his hand.

"Mr. Crawford," said he, "you are aware of the attachment I feel towards your sister, Catherine—and you must of course be equally well acquainted with the nature of the arrangement my father has made with your revered parent, touching the expiration of a year ere we decide in a matter that will interest us for life."

"Yes, Captain Stewart; I received a letter a few days ago from my mother. She informed me of all that had taken place, as well as of your intentions to honour me with a visit at the residence of my benefactor, Mr. Fitzgerald."

"It was natural that I should wish to become acquainted with you, since we shall be related shortly," said Stewart.

"I have already written to congratulate Kate most sincerely upon the conquest she has made. Although she be my sister, Captain Stewart," continued James, "I must affirm without flattery to her, or pride in her charms, that she is as amiable as she is beautiful."

"You have not exaggerated your praise," returned Stewart with enthusiasm. "But when shall I be allowed the pleasure of introducing you to my father, Lord Fanmore?"

"Whenever you are inclined to do me that honour, I will accept your proposition with gratitude. By the way, I heard of your meeting with Sir George Mornay lately: Mr. Arnold informed me of the circumstance first—I then read an elaborate account of it in the newspapers."

"Oh! it was nothing!" exclaimed Stewart.

"I beg your pardon—the thanks of our family are due to you for your generous and noble conduct," replied Crawford.

"Not at all; any other gentleman in a similar situation would have been bound to have acted in a similar manner," said Stewart with sincerity.

At this moment Mr. Fitzgerald entered the apartment, and was presented in due form to Captain Stewart, who bowed politely, not awed as many others had, and would have, been by the presence of the mighty man, whose wealth was ample enough to buy the half of London!

Old Dimmock performed his part to perfection. He gave an excellent character of James, with a patronising air, and spoke of his abilities, his sound sense, and his moral virtues, with the enthusiasm of an Anthony eulogizing a Cæsar. He concluded his remarks, which greatly gratified Stewart, by desiring Crawford, in a tone of voice intended to show it was to be deemed a special favour, to engage the officer to stay and dine with them.

This invitation was declined, on the plea of a promise made by Stewart to pass the evening with his father, because his brother had just returned home from the north of England, whither he had been for his amusement.

The Captain nevertheless declared his intention, if it were convenient, to call in the morning to introduce Crawford to Lord Fanmore, and to the Honourable Mr. Stewart. Not a word was said concerning the robbery; and James took good care to avoid broaching so unpleasant a subject.

In the evening Crawford had an interview with Arnold, whom he met by appointment in Hyde Park as usual. The crafty individual praised his young protégé for having left the hotel, and for having settled in a private dwelling, declaring that the same idea had struck him a few days ago. James related the conduct of Lord Fanmore regarding his sister Catherine: but Arnold was already aware of the whole business, as our readers must remember.

They then consulted upon the expediency of obtaining another loan from the accommodating Mr. Nathaniel; and it was agreed that Crawford should call upon that gentleman in the course of



the week. Several other applications had been made by money-lenders, and usurers, to the young impostor: on all these matters Arnold gave his advice. But we shall not introduce any more of this class to the reader; suffice it to notice, while we are upon the subject, that a farther sum of fifteen thousand pounds was speedily raised amongst the applicants alluded to, unknown (of course) to Mr. Nathaniel, whose resources were also to be again attacked.

Arnold, in the course of this evening's conversation, hinted somewhat concerning Fitzgerald, to which Crawford promised to attend immediately. The deceiver was, however, rather annoyed when James asked him why he would not visit at their house in Conduit-Street.

"Methinks," said Crawford reproachfully,

"that you have reasons with which you do not choose to make me acquainted: it is impossible, Mr. Arnold—I cannot believe my suspicion—you are not capable of making me your vehicle, whereby to convey to your barns the grain procured by my dishonesty."

Crawford, by-the-bye, had neither concealed the fact of receiving, nor withheld the money which he had obtained from Mr. Maxwell; and he had already dwelt emphatically on his prospects in that quarter.

"James, you wrong me," returned Arnold. "Who in our midnight excursions was the first to risk everything? who struck the first blow—save on that fatal night, when by the milestone—"

"Oh! for God's sake do not mention—do not

allude to that terrible scene!" exclaimed James, while his hair stood on end, and a cold sweat ran down his ashy cheeks in large drops.

"Well then—and whose life was in jeopardy, when Stewart's purse was the object of our venture? whose stratagem saved us all from the scaffold?—Nor less could I name other instances, James—to show that you are wrong."

"Pardon me, my dear friend—I will not intrude upon your secrets:—act as you consider proper in all things: I believe your reasons cannot be otherwise than good, even if they induce you to refrain from visiting us publicly."

Crawford spoke sincerely; the sophistry of Arnold always overruled him.

"Let us drop this style of conversation," said the worthy tutor of the promising youth: "this morning I saw Rivingstone in Newgate. He bears his misfortunes like a man, particularly as some great person has promised to befriend him. How he came to be acquainted with him, I know not: but the poor fellow relies on a rotten staff for support."

"Why so?" enquired Crawford.

"To tell you the real truth," proceeded Arnold, "it were as well that Rivingstone should be out of the way, if we can get him hanged without danger to ourselves!"

"Good God, Mr. Arnold!" exclaimed James, astonished, villain as he was, at the nature of his friend's sentiments, and the coolness with which they were delivered. "Will you not do all you can to assist him?"

"Not if such a mode of conduct militates against my interests," returned Arnold, with the most perfect sang froid in the world. "All I dread is that Rivingstone may make some damnable confession, sufficient to threaten us unpleasantly, if he be condemned to death."

"My life on it, he would scorn such behaviour!" ejaculated Crawford.

"At all events we must be certain. Now I know very well—that is I have taken care that the great person alluded to, will not interfere in the matter without my advice, although Rivingstone relies on his influence to obtain a commutation of the dreadful sentence that is sure to be passed on him. There is one thing, then, that troubles me—Rivingstone may offer to betray a certain terrible conspiracy against the public welfare, if his own case be taken into consideration by the King."

"Of that I do not consider there exists the slightest chance: I would wager all our funds, which are some thousands more than they were two months ago, that Rivingstone is staunch to his friends. How often he has spoken on the subject!"

"'Tis true," returned Arnold, who, being an accomplished hypocrite himself, fancied of course that all others were to be suspected.

"I myself," continued James, "am perfectly at ease in this affair: if you will not desert him, and if you pay him attention now that he is in trouble and danger, he will remember you with gratitude even on the scaffold."

"I shall consider the matter farther," said Arnold.

He then proposed that they should walk towards Conduit-Street together. This was agreed to: and he did not say farewell till he and his young pupil arrived opposite the very house where the impostors dwelt. They chatted about Crawford's

recent adventures relative to the soldier and the fire—strokes of policy which greatly pleased Arnold. They also conversed upon Crawford's intimacy with the Maxwells, and all other affairs of interest.

Arrived at the door of the house, Arnold promised to write in case he had any thing to say before they might meet again; for he had now seen enough of Crawford's staunch and chivalrous disposition (in certain respects), to render him no longer fearful of trusting the youth with a letter.

He repeated his wishes regarding Fitzgerald once more, and departed whither his business led him.

On the following morning Captain Stewart called to introduce James to the abode of Lord Fanmore in Conduit-Street. Arrived at that splendid mansion, Crawford felt himself partially alarmed lest he should be questioned on the topic which it but little pleased him to discuss with strangers, whose impetuosity or curiosity might confuse him in his replies concerning Mr. Fitzgerald. A moment's reflection, however, was sufficient for him to recover his courage, as he was ushered into the apartment where his lordship was ready to receive him.

"Be seated, Mr. Crawford," said the nobleman. "You are welcome to my house, since William is about to do so—(foolish thing," he was going to add; but checking himself, he supplied a more eligible epithet)—"a desirable thing in uniting his hand with that of your sister."

James thought his lordship spoke somewhat bluntly: he nevertheless uttered a few words touching the honour accruing to his family by the anticipated connexion.

"Yes—young man—it is an honour a very great honour that my son's intentions reflect upon Miss Catherine Crawford," remarked the nobleman, laying a particular stress on the solitary Christian name.

"Nay, my dear father," interrupted Stewart, sitting uneasily upon his chair. "Mr. Crawford—"

At this moment the heir apparent to the Fanmore title entered the apartment, and was introduced to Crawford by his father in a pompous manner, as the Honourable Mr. Augustus Hyder Stewart—although there was no necessity for mentioning his Christian appellations, he being the elder brother.

He was a young man of about six-and-twenty years of age, with red hair, and a face dreadfully disfigured by that worst of human scourges—the small-pox. His figure alone was his saving clause: but his temper was as sour as his features were repulsive. He possessed all the pride and none of the good qualities of his father—few of the honourable feelings, and none of the nobly charitable ones that characterized his brother. In addition to all this he was quarrelsome to a degree. A confirmed duellist, "who had killed his man," he was abhorred by the good, and dreaded by the timid; while the women were terrified at his fierce looks, or were excited to laughter by the affectation of his manners.

Such was the individual who made a haughty bow to Crawford, and walked to the other end of the room, where he amused himself with a book, occasionally casting a contemptuous glance at the visitor, as if to scan the materials that composed him. He would then hum an opera tune as well

as a cracked voice admitted of such harmony. James disliked his present situation, and speedily arose to depart. The Honourable Mr. Stewart did not move to say farewell; he merely uttered a short, "Good day, Mr. What's-your-name!"—but Lord Fanmore actually shook the youth's hand almost as cordially as did the young officer who appeared annoyed at the indifferent manner in which his future brother-in-law had been treated by Mr. Stewart.

When Crawford reached Conduit-Street once more, heartily glad at having escaped the ordeal of questions to which he was exposed at Lord Fanmore's house, Fitzgerald came to him with a joyful countenance, and said that during his absence their wine vaults had been well stored by a most fortunate occurrence.

"Five minutes after you and Captain Stewart had left the door," cried Fitzgerald, "a vehicle drove up, and an immense quantity of wine in bottles, carefully packed in hampers, appeared to form its contents. I desired the meaning of this: and the following note was put into my hands."

He then read a letter which ran thus:—

"Hearing from my friend, Mr. Nathaniel, that you, Sir, have hired his house in Conduit-Street, I have been so bold as to send samples of a variety of wines, which I beg you will accept as a small present, in return for which, if you find them to your taste, I shall be most happy to supply you at reduced prices. I have enclosed my cards, with the different rates at which my articles are vended.

"I have the honour to remain, Sir,

"Your very obedient humble servant,

"JACOB WRIGHT.

"To—Fitzgerald, Esq.,

"Conduit-street."

"Of course," pursued Fitzgerald, when he had finished the above epistle, "I desired, for appearance' sake, to pay Mr. Wright's foreman, who accompanied the cart: but an absolute negative was returned, and the man withdrew, his palm being anointed with the oil that a five pound note was capable of exhaling."

"Things progress admirably," said Crawford. "But during my conversation with Mr. Arnold last evening," he hinted that it would be better, if you were to make a semblance of undertaking a journey to Portugal, and thus leave me alone to prosecute the scheme for the present: because you could not launch out into any extravagance,—I can—and shall have an excuse for so doing. I may say that your parsimonious habits have not allowed you to supply my necessities over liberally with resources."

"Your plan delights me," returned Fitzgerald. "We have now excellent credit at every place in London—it is a pity if speedy use is not made of it: and, indeed, I am almost tired of playing the gentleman impostor, and should be glad to return home for the present, till we divide, as was the agreement, the profits of our plan. I cannot be required in the matter much longer."

"No:—so if late one night you were to pack up your carpet bag, and return by the coach to Bagshot, I can report, the following morning, that you have set off for Liverpool, to transact some business preparatory to undertaking a voyage to Lisbon—a step which, I shall say, your affairs render absolutely necessary."

"This was agreed upon: and on the ensuing night, when the domestics had retired to repose, Fitzgerald put on a suit of plain decent garments,

without the quaint style that characterized his habiliments as the rich miser, and hurried towards Piccadilly, whence a night-coach was about to start for Southampton.

So completely had he changed his appearance, that he stood not the smallest chance of being recognized; and as he travelled inside, it being also very dark, he arrived safely at Bagshot, without having excited in a soul the slightest suspicion of who he really was, or had lately pretended to be. He had taken leave of Crawford, and made him promise to write occasionally to him, and to direct his letters to a certain address at Bagshot, where his son should go to enquire for them two or three times a week.

Crawford was heartily glad to have thus got rid of Mr. Dimmock with such facility.

On the following morning the servants wondered where he was: but James satisfied their curiosity by stating that at about eleven o'clock the preceding evening an important letter, sent by despatch from Liverpool, had arrived; and informed Mr. Fitzgerald, that his presence was immediately required in that town, and that, according to the general quietness of his habits, he had set off directly, late though it were. James moreover added, as if carelessly, that the old gentleman was not expected to return for five or six months, as the same business, that called him to Liverpool, would oblige him to proceed to Portugal almost immediately.

This was soon bruited abroad and even reached the ears of Mrs. Crawford in a day or two. She then wrote a letter to her son, begging him, since he was now able to act for himself, to go to the cottage to see his mother and sister, or else appoint a time when they themselves might repair to London, and stay at his house in Conduit-Street.

To this Crawford replied that he would himself visit the cottage in the course of a week, and pass a few days with his family. He then proceeded to the dwelling of Mr. Nathaniel, and proposed the raising of another loan. That was speedily agreed to—and six thousand pounds were forthcoming the moment the necessary document was prepared.

The moment it was known that Mr. Fitzgerald had departed, numberless tradesmen sent their cards to Crawford. They, of course, supposed that the old miser had left him a sum of money which he might have considered adequate to supply the youth's wants, but with which James himself would soon make away. They therefore knew that his necessities must be administered to by means of credit—and they were rejoiced to furnish him with their goods at that rate; because they felt assured, in their own minds, that the day was not far off when an enormous per centage would be gained on the payments they anticipated.

Accordingly a dashing cuticle came from the establishment of Mr. Wheelwell in Park Lane;—a pair of handsome bays were turned out in elegant style for the young man by another creditous dealer;—a couple of saddle-horses were put into the stables of the house in Conduit-Street by a third;—even the very tailors were anxious that such-and-such a cut should characterize his coat. They vied with each other in fitting out his wardrobe in the most becoming manner: it was therefore extensive and costly.

The accommodating Mr. Wright was duly informed of the excellence of his generous wines, and was honoured with a considerable order to fill the cellars once more. This gentleman, before, the wine was packed up, put his name upon the wax that secured the cork of every bottle, so that Crawford's visitors should discover where they might purchase "a choice and rare article," as he termed it.

Let the gentle reader bear this circumstance in mind, trivial as it may now appear.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Merciful Heaven! why dwells not in a face,

Some mark the hidden bosom to reveal,

That we might know the generous from the base,

From eye, or forehead, stamp'd with nature's seal.

For all the secret virtues we may trace,

Of root, or herb, or gold, or tempered steel;

And safe amid the flocks we roam, but fly

The glare of tiger's, or hyena's eye.

To return to the Maxwells. On the night of guiltily and delirious pleasure, when with the recklessness of a wanton, Sophia squandered away the priceless jewel of her soul—her chastity—it was a very short time after her paramour stealthily took his departure, that the merchant made his appearance, coming home from the civic banquet. His daughter,—infatuated and licentious girl,—blessed her stars that he was so late of returning; for she really looked, felt, and conducted herself, as if the luckiest and most enviable thing in the world had befallen her; foolishly dreaming that she had surely and irrevocably secured to herself alone the love and the person of James Crawford. Her father returned considerably elated with wine, and was in the very highest and most buoyant frame of spirit, beholding every thing through the medium of roseate hues and large magnifiers.

He found Sophia seated, even at that late hour, within the very drawing room where she had so lasciviously toyed with Crawford ere the consummation of her ruin was effected: for there she tarried as if clinging to joyous recollections, instead of repairing to her mother's bed-side.

The merchant at first supposed that something was amiss. Of the two children Sophia had always been his favourite; Mrs. Maxwell on the other hand affecting the son; and it was the father's constant practice, before being seated, on coming from the counting-house, to enquire for, or seek out his daughter, presenting at least a paternal kiss, but far more frequently some solid token of his parental yearnings.

"Why! how now, Sophia? Here by thyself, at this midnight time? Pouting, too, like one out of sorts? Oh! *the Heir*,—the Hero has been saucy, has he? I dare say some lovers' quarrel has taken place! In the meanwhile keep thy spirits up: I have glorious news to tell thee, that will set thee to rights in a twinkling! But let us to thy mother, Sophy,—she is a good creature,—and one narrative of the charming things that thou can'st not guess, will serve you both."

At this rate the old fellow, garrulous and stupid, went on, heedless of the general attempts made by his daughter to assure him that she was not offended with Crawford, but was only indulging a reverie, and imagining such beautiful things as no tongue could describe.

"Why, now," he said, as he led her along to

Mrs. Maxwell's chamber, "I perceive that thou art not sad; but that an unusual glow is in thy cheek, and a brilliant sparkle in thine eye, Sophy. Come, kiss papa, and thou shalt have the richest gown on Ludgate Hill, that thou or thy darling shall choose, to-morrow. Come, let us be happy; for I have glorious things to reveal to you."

It might at the very moment of this silly rhapsody have been whispered by a seer into the merchant's ears, that his ignorance was bliss; for the knowledge of the exact truth would have been horror and agony to him.

"We are reaching to the very pinnacle of prosperity and public consideration," said the merchant, as he seated himself on his wife's bedside, with his daughter: "and I shall tell you how it is and has been—a proceeding out of my wonted way, for, it is seldom that a speculator like myself lets the right hand know what the other does."

He paused and proceeded thus:—"You, my dear,"—directly addressing his wife,—"*you* are aware that with your's and Sophy's consent I laid out all the money left to her, dear girl! and of which I was naturally appointed trustee, in the South American Mining Company. Well—you are also aware how speedily this enterprise has succeeded."

"Good, so far, my dear," said Mrs. Maxwell.

The merchant resumed:—"I have since that lucky hit, speculated to a much wider extent, and in sundry directions, and am every hour in confident expectation of having arrivals and tidings of golden harvests; but it is my intention to retain the fruits of these enterprises, in the meanwhile entirely in my own hands, for the purpose of pursuing still larger schemes of aggrandizement."

"And nothing for my son, our dear boy," cried Mrs. Maxwell.

"He has not been forgotten, I assure you," answered the sanguine, assured, and, for that night at least, talkative and boastful money-maker. "In Spanish and other foreign loans,—in the South Sea Whale Fishery, in—in—I don't remember how many other channels, have I shot ahead, and doubt not of being in a very short time one of the most opulent of the merchant-princes of London. Now, have you nothing to suggest after learning all this, my dear?" still mainly addressing himself to his spouse, who was manifestly bettered by the gold-promising intelligence.

Mrs. Maxwell cogitated for a few seconds, and then in the healthiest possible tone cried, "We must, my dear Maxwell, 'ave a larger 'ouse,—we must remove to the most splendid and fashionable street, West End district."

"Exactly as I had resolved on," said the master of the house. "You had always, my dear, a happy knack of jumping into my ideas; or how else would you have been Mrs. Maxwell? Besides," added the merchant, "considering our connexion and prospects with Mr. Crawford, it is fitting that we should enlarge our establishment and sphere; for, although it may be some time yet before Sophia and he are husband and wife, the world will expect from a person of my known opulence, and our expectations of Mr. Fitzgerald's adopted heir, a certain appearance and pomp, in order to maintain our rightful position and influence. The day cannot be far distant when they must separate from us; but till then we shall have

to preserve the necessary rank suited, it may be said, to a double family, having a double retinue."

It was in this feeble, vulgar-minded, and complacent style that Mr. Maxwell discoursed.

"And now," continued the merchant; "I have delicious matters to communicate to thee more especially, my little Sophia, and which have come to my ear since I quitted you in the morning. I am creditably informed that as soon as James is a trifle older, he will be invited by a large constituency, to represent them in Parliament; and then, Sophy, you will not only be united to a Member of the House of Commons, but to an individual that is destined to shine as a great statesman. Strange too, but not more strange than flattering to us, Mr. Crawford's admiration of, and devotion to our family—in short his preference of Sophia—is quite the talk of the higher classes in the City. The generally accepted report is this—that all the matrimonial arrangements have been settled and solemnly ratified, respecting the actual nuptials. Of course, I could not go exactly so far as this; and therefore said but little when so many congratulations were showered down upon me. But you, Sophia, at any rate, must be in a position to say how far short your lover remains from being yours, and yours only, in the holy bonds of wedlock. Has he seriously—has he frequently—has he importunately asked—implored you to be his till death separate you?"

"He has, indeed, times without number! He is mine, and I am his," answered the simple, fond, unguarded girl; her heart panting with recollections and hopes, of which she could not venture to give a verbal description.

Did not the Maxwells now stand firmly established on the very pinnacle of prosperity and bliss? The only one drawback to their unalloyed felicity and exuberant joy on the night in question, was on the part of the mother, who more than once, with a deep sigh, said, "I wish my darling boy 'ad been 'ere to share in our plans and pleasures."

Yes: the father and the mother had reached a pinnacle. But we must hesitate to declare that it was stable in its foundations, or had its summit securely guarded against the consequences of a false step. Sophia had but recently as nearly kissed the heavens, to her thinking, as ever it were possible for parent to reach in imagination. And behold the result: at one step, with one headlong plunge, she went over the precipice, never again to resume a midway position.

Have a care then, ye pair of air-castle building parents. Your descent may be rapid,—your eventual degradation terrible to contemplate, even in fancy! Ye are not profound readers of the human heart; and now in the fangs, as you assuredly are, of impostors, it will be almost miraculous if you fall not, sacrificed by one whose face and forehead have not yet had plainly stamped upon them the seal of baseness, of infamy, of blood-red crime!

Miss Maxwell bade adieu to her parents for the night, and repaired directly to that very chamber, so recently the scene of her illicit pleasures—there, with a gloating fancy, to renew all the circumstances that had occurred, and to dream them over and over, even when sleep sealed her eyelids.

CHAPTER XXV.

Thickens the plot—more intricate becomes
The web so deftly woven; but the frail
And ruined girl suspects the infamy.

JACOBS.

Lost girl; hast thou no shame with thee? no other blushes but those of the hot blood that crimson thy cheeks? How proud thou seemest of thy charms, remembering how they entranced thy guilty companion! But much better had it been for thee hadst thou taken to heart the Wise Man's counsel, where he speaketh to the young of the days that are to come when they shall say they have no pleasure in them,—when the grinders shall cease because they are few, and the golden bowl is broken. If length of years be vouchsafed unto thee, Sophia Maxwell, wrinkles and withering shall overtake thy skin and flesh; or, unless by a miracle thou art regenerated, sorrow and guilt shall plant furrows on thy brow, and evil passions shall stamp on thy visage, still so innocent and sweet to behold, the hate and the revenge of a demon.

On the following day Crawford paid the Maxwells a hasty visit, alleging that business claimed his attention. He whispered however in Sophia's ear, that he was longing to spend a secret hour with her, and should certainly embrace the first opportunity of doing so.

But we shall not go into details of such a nature; suffice it to state, that for some eight or ten days he was extremely punctual to his appointments with her, until, indeed, he grew cloyed with her lascivious abandonment; and he determined, since he had fairly commenced the career of debauchery, to riot in variety, and to court the uttermost excitement that his sensual passions could sustain.

Nor did Sophia continue long to be insensible to his exhausted fervour: and with a woman's jealousy she began to charge him with inconsistency.

"I am sure, my Crawford, that there is some change in you. You look not in my face as you recently did;—you speak not to me with the same honied accents,—you remain not with me but as if it were a weariness. Oh! if your love has fled, or if your fondness has cooled, let me be told the truth at once; and I shall not long trouble you with my importunity,—not even with my presence!"

At first James would at times jeer her for being silly,—tell her that they could not always be cooing and billing like pigeons,—and that she must learn to bear with a man's altered manner, when he had serious concerns to think of.

"Is this the way you talked to me but lately?" she would, with a slightly upbraiding tone, enquire of him; and then he would render her almost desperate, by insinuating that he had been making new acquaintances amongst the fair, which, of course, she interpreted by the words "*new conquests*."

In short, it was but a very few days after her grievous fall had taken place, that unutterable anxiety and misery of mind overtook her—robbing her of that placid loveliness which heretofore had characterised her style of beauty—working sad havoc among the harmonies of her face, and the rotund graces of her person.

What new purpose can have seized James Crawford? Does he really contemplate breaking off with Miss Maxwell entirely? and is he so

prematurely endangering his interest with the merchant?

Do not think that our hero is such an arrant fool as to throw from him the golden chances that are actually pressed upon him by the Maxwells! He is himself too forecasting, and he is instructed by too wily a counsellor, madly to make shipwreck of his fortunes in that direction.

In fact, ere arousing a single suspicion on Sophia's part, he was again resolved to draw from the nothing-loath merchant, a sum of money. He was spurred on by Arnold, whose restless inquiries and almost universal acquaintance with the condition and prospects of the capitalists and merchants of London, had enabled him to discover that Mr. Maxwell's affairs were on the eve of grievous embarrassment, and that, in all probability, he would figure in the *Gazette*, before the lapse of another six months. But, so fearful of a sudden and immediate smash befalling the merchant, was the miscreant Arnold, that he wrote to his willing pupil a letter couched in the following terms:—

"My Dear James,

"Lose not a moment on the receipt of this, but hasten to Maxwell—catching him, if possible, at the breakfast hour. Strive to elicit from his foolish confidence a thousand or something as near to that sum as you can. His prosperity is at an end,—his ruin impends; and as to ourselves an explosion may unexpectedly take place. Having succeeded with the merchant, you had better toss from you his doll of a daughter. She will be penniless. At any rate you can have no farther profitable prospects in that quarter. Only for a few months,—perhaps only a few weeks, can you hope to keep up the imposture. Therefore make hay while the sun shines—strike the iron while 'tis hot,—seize fortune by the forelock, and then for some foreign land, and flourish on the splendid earnings of our fertile imaginations and of our dextrous handicraft."

Such was the burden of the villain's instructions to his apt and eager pupil, who flew to the merchant's residence without stopping even for the moment that would have been required to toss the epistle into the fire. It was therefore in the meanwhile stowed in the pocket of his upper coat, and no further thoughts of, unless as a direction instantly to be followed and obeyed.

Crawford was off post-haste to the merchant's, and was met, as usual, with the fondest alacrity by Sophia the moment he entered the mansion,—his manner of knock and ring, even the sound of his footstep, being read with unerring quickness each time he made his approach.

Brief, however, was his greeting, for it was with her father that he desired to hold a colloquy. She was, of course, not overflattered by his curt address, for he scarcely allowed her to assist him as he doffed his upper garment.

In an instant he was at the breakfast table, and now she perceived with what a bland and winning expression he discoursed with her papa.

"It is just as was his manner when he stole my heart," she inwardly whispered. "I suspect all is not honest and candid about Crawford. Oh! that I could dive into his soul, and see what is passing there."

A tear already stood in the ruined girl's eye, which she strove to hide. It would not be stemmed: therefore she arose, her emotion unperceived by the busy colloquists, and sped into the hall.

The coat was there! Something seemed to whisper that the coat might make disclosures; and with a trembling hand she dipped into its pocket. Ar-

nold's letter was within her fingers, and, thrusting it into her bosom, she hurried to her bedchamber.

It was the deed of a moment to peruse its contents and of a very few moments more to transcribe them: then replacing the epistle where she found it, to ruminate, to marvel, to conjecture, eye, and to arrive at the darkest conclusions, were the next exercises of her smitten and torn soul.

"Alas! alas!" she inwardly cried, "I am for ever undone: Crawford is an impostor, I clearly discover! He is a villain at heart, and league'd with villains! I dread his arts with my father, but how can I sing myself between them, for I am at the mercy of the impostor? He! and he is now at my mercy."

She flung herself upon her knees,—she tossed her arms heaven-ward, and with the look of a maniac thus implored,—"*Great God, arm me with hate towards my destroyer! Let him not escape the vengeance of my too trusting soul! Let perdition seize me, so that I send him to the bottomless pit before his time!*"

Who would have dreamed that that lovely, maddened, and fond girl could have been so suddenly transformed into a fiend? Who could have imagined that a nature so apparently feeble,—that a character so little cultured and buttressed, should in a moment be strung to greatness,—the greatness of ireful passion,—the inextinguishable hatred of a spirit of hell?

Sophia Maxwell had not the slightest foretaste of what she could contrive and achieve:—not one in the world could ever have divined that she was born to act the part of a malign heroine!

Fortunate it was for Crawford that morning that he left the merchant's mansion, laden with a thousand pounds, ere the maddened girl had returned to the hall; for she had intended there to remain till he should come forth, and to lay him a corpse at her feet.

Two or three days now elapsed before James paid another visit to the Maxwells. Not that he had the slightest suspicion of the discovery made by Sophia, but because it was his determination to break off from her with all possible haste. By the time that he did pay the next visit, she had well schooled herself to a duplicit part—prepared either to arraign and upbraid him, or to maintain a composure as circumstances might dictate.

As he advanced to offer the common places of courtesy, she refused not her hand, but it was icy cold. Her cheeks were colourless; and her eyes, without travelling, rested upon his breast, as if to penetrate its very core. Not a smile of welcome nor a frown of displeasure moved the lineaments of her countenance, while the few words that fell from her were measured and frigid.

James marvelled, but took no verbal notice of what he considered to be some sudden whim of temper. He therefore bowed an adieu, and was instantly out of sight, resolved to let at least a week escape before he should again trouble her with a call.

Eventful week in the history of the merchant and the merchant's family! At one fell blow his capital was so seriously menaced,—nay, his credit so nearly made to totter, that he was glad to rush to the fifty thousand pounds allotted as Sophia's dowry, and boastfully accounted by him to be perfectly secure against all mishaps. The whole of that sum was however, unequal to the gap that had to be stopped

and the threatened attack upon the credit of the firm; and hardly had he been apprised of his sudden and great misfortune, when Arnold communicated the particulars to his pupil Crawford, whose course it was now to speed him once more to Sophia, resolved that she should no longer remain ignorant of the termination that was to be put to their intimacy.

He found her in the drawing-room, quite alone: nor did she stir from her chair as he entered the apartment.

James coolly and uninvited seated himself, and was the first to speak.

"I have thought it proper, Miss Maxwell," no longer is "*Sophia*" the word—"to wait upon you once more, and after a lapse of several days since I was last in your house, to inquire what might be the cause of your cold—your insulting bearing towards me on that last occasion. When I have your answer, I shall know how to shape my next speech."

"Sir," she replied, "if your heart,—your conscience," pronouncing the word with the utmost scorn, "do not inform you that you are a villain and an impostor,—a villain towards myself, and an impostor wherever there is any one to be imposed upon for your base ends,—it would be in vain for me to discourse to you on the subject. Suffice it, however, to say, that I now know you well,—who and what you are; for be assured that while you and your accomplices have been making yourselves busy to fathom the secrets of my dear father's affairs, I have,—weak, and wicked girl as you have, alas! found me—not been idle to discover many of the particulars of your late career."

Crawford contrived to maintain nearly his wonted composure during this unexpected and alarming address, feeling confident that Miss Maxwell's character, interests, and prospects were so entirely within his power, that she would not dare to provoke him to the uttermost. He therefore merely cautioned her to have a care of the use to which she put her tongue concerning him; otherwise he should blast her reputation for ever, and bring down the grey hairs of her parents with sorrow to the grave. He also added with a sneer, "Of course, Miss Maxwell cannot now look forward to a matrimonial connexion with me, considering the beggared condition of her fortunes."

Her reply to this was, "Villain! coward! begone! we shall meet again and again; but for this time at least make speed to quit my sight."

Having said this, and as he rose to depart, she commenced repeating the contents of Arnold's letter, escorting him to the street door the while,—her deliberate and emphatic repetition of the words requiring a space equal to what elapsed between his rising from the chair to his exit into the street.

Eventful week, in all truth, to the Maxwells. Crash! crash! go all their fortunes. Heavy failures of correspondents,—appalling disasters at sea,—oversights in not effecting marine insurances,—in short, a run of fatalities seldom paralleled even in the adventurous mercantile world,—brought bankruptcy and ruin home to our merchant, laying him low on a bed of despondency and sickness, and bringing him near to the gates of death.

Sad vicissitude! strange revolutions!

It was now the function of Sophia, aforesaid so

thoughtless and self-pleased, to tend her prostrated parents, all heartless as she was, and bowed down with her still more direful ruin.

But the cup of sorrow and woe was not yet filled to the brim;—that doomed family had other tribulation in immediate store for them.

Alas! where is the son,—the mother's darling? He has unaccountably prolonged his absence in the provinces. Last time heard of, he wrote from Liverpool, promising an early return to town. Further tidings of, or from him, are not received, until there appears in a country newspaper, among the records of Coroners' Inquests, the story of a young gentleman, answering in all particulars to the description of Charles Maxwell, who had blown out his brains after a run of the worst luck in a den of gamblers.

"My Charles self-murdered!" shrieked the distracted mother, as soon as she was able to comprehend the full meaning of the melancholy tidings, and to find an escape for her pent tears.

With a greedy sorrow dwelling on the awful catastrophe, and accumulating its horrors by repetition, Mrs. Maxwell held on in her own style. But as the woeful strain of the wailing and yearning mother proceeded, it waxed feebler and feebler in utterance, till closing when she gave up the ghost.

"Mother! do you think that all ill and wickedness may be done, rather than self-murder? You were wrong, mother. Far worse it is when the girl has trusted to the villain,—has bartered away her purity and innocence,—selling herself to Satan and iniquity, as I have done. Happy brother! happy when compared with me,—with what I am to become! Oh! were it not that I shall live to be avenged on that miscreant Crawford,—to have my blood charged with fell poison to him,—to find my nature daily gathering a bitter gall towards his soul's life, I would this hour join thee, brother, in the hell beneath."

Sophia Maxwell, reared in the lap of affluent indulgence, the object of the caresses of nurses, and the daily caresses of parents; flattered from infancy by all who sought the hospitality of her father, and by the time she reached the age of budding womanhood, the idol of youths with bright prospects, and high aspirations,—was nothing but the spoilt, the soft, the fond, and the utterly trustful girl when she first met James Crawford;—nay, as we have with grievous pain seen, for a considerable space of time, after that momentous event in her history. Now however that she was mercilessly thrown upon her own poor resources,—now that she was stung to fell vengeance,—that she was hurried to the very verge of black despair,—nay, that her immortal part was filled with the sense of guilt and wrung with remorse,—while added to all these terrible experiences, frightful bereavement, unimagined ruin, and unutterable woe pursue and, with surest aims overtake the fated family,—she is, as if by the wand of sorcery, almost instantaneously changed from the ductile and pliant beauty, trained to lip and simper in the drawing-room or at the assembly, into the heroine, all observant and active—pay absolutely magnanimous, although swayed more by a demon's hate than the potency of sublime virtue.

After soliloquising concerning her brother's suicidal deed, and recognising in her own case a more woeful condition—greater grounds for the promptings to self-murder, she speeds her to the poor merchant's chamber, half to feed her mind

with the sight of ineffable anguish,—half to minister to the only living being for whom she entertains a never dying affection.

"Alas, my dear, my sorely stricken father!" she ejaculated as she reached his door, and listened to those heavy sobs that caused the very house to shake, and its beams to tremble; "now it is that I am made to find you are the all in all to me,—now it is for the first time I am forced to feel you will have to cling to my feeble succour, as I have hitherto been wont to cling to your ever parental arm: and heaven lend me strength to enact my part! Thus shall I have in my dutiful performances to you, and in my deep cherished purposes of revenge towards the impostor, that which will invigorate my soul."

And say, reader, if thou canst doubt of Sophia Maxwell having been suddenly thrown into a school where the soul would necessarily be made to wax strong,—where from the soul would be evoked all the powers with which it had been natively imbued? She gently opened the door, and a moment after bent over that only parent, prostrated soul and body, whose sobs are so heart-moving, and so discernible throughout the dwelling.

"Ah, sad sight!" she at length said: "to behold a woman's grief is nothing to this. Our tears come readily, and our sorrow is soon assuaged. But a man's anguish,—a strong man's sobs,—a father's speechless agony,—the tears that are pent to mortal tightness,—alas! this is a sight quite new to me, and such surely as in any other circumstances than those which I intensely feel to be mine, would overwhelm me. But I must not fail, for my mission is great."

Having thus spoken, the aforetime plastic and frivolous girl lifted her parent's head and kissed him with sweetest and prolonged tenderness, thus addressing him the while:—

"Father," she said in her silver and most searching tones, "it is your Soph that speaks to you, and would console you. Your Soph is still left you,"—(but she gave such a start and look on uttering these last words as seemed to indicate harrowing thought or recollection). "Speak to your child, father,—your daughter lives to comfort you—and she shall surely do it."

Upon this the tumult of the merchant's breast burst its silence,—the pent torrent found escape,—and long and loud he wept, throwing himself into the arms of his daughter, as if he had been a helpless child, and she a masculine nurse. At length he found words and the power to give them articulation.

"Sophia," cried he, in brief and broken sentences, "let us fly from this,—let us to the uttermost end of the earth rather than here,—mankind are leagued to my ruin,—fate will not be appeased,—God has set his face against me! Let us die and be forgotten! I have no more strength to struggle; and thou, poor thing, my own and only child, what can thy frail arms and delicate nature do in a world like this?"

"Do? father!—Why I can comfort you. I find myself growing strong, father; and trust me, I am born to cause you wonder!"

At the word "wonder" she started, and inwardly replaced the utterance, by ejaculating, "Perchance to bring a heavier woe,—perhaps to kill you outright with grief and disgrace."

Sophia rose to her feet; and the merchant a moment after did the same. It is probable that

he felt a revival, at least of physical strength,—perhaps a flickering of hope reached his soul. Was it indeed possible, for the soothing devotion of his beloved and motherless daughter to go unheeded, —to be spent without leaving some gratifying sense? But if Mr. Maxwell felt somewhat relieved and awakened, as he followed his daughter to the window, perhaps instinctively to reap some degree of life from the bright sunshine without, there now met his eye that which speedily banished from his breast every trace of consolation; for ere five minutes had elapsed he was in the hands of officers of justice, charged with an offence of a serious nature. In short, he was accused of a vile fraud in his recent mercantile transactions,—of a gross vitiation: and to the bar of the magistrate he must forthwith be conducted;—from that bar to the dismal walls of Newgate is the next step for him!

Tell us, gentle reader, whether the cup of misery which it was appointed for Mr. Maxwell to drain to the dregs, did not now overflow!—whether another bitter ingredient could have been thrown into the vessel?

"Yes!" cried Sophia,—"had he but a suspicion of my irrevocable fall,—were it but to be whispered to him as a future possibility, much more as a past dishonour, all else that hath befallen him in the list of his catastrophes would vanish from his thoughts, or be regarded as trivial. It would be to murder him,—to slay him at a blow, to tell him I was the undone one! Heaven preserve him from the direful tidings! I would not kill my dear—my ill-fated father."

And Sophia—wretched, remorseful girl—upon this wept the bitterest tears she ever shed, bewailing that ever she had seen God's light, or basked in the beams of a parent's immeasurable love.

We must not linger, telling in minute detail of the sad scenes which were necessarily inseparable from the merchant's imprisonment upon such a serious charge as that just mentioned. Suffice it, that while Sophia was not utterly crushed by the blow, her father, as she herself reasoned from the manner in which he bore up, not only began to exhibit a more manly spirit than during the other and earlier calamities, but had good grounds for his equanimity and confidence. Still, there was a point in the records of misfortune and misery, where, if the concentrating and accumulating evils do not absolutely kill, they must in some sense medicine themselves. This must have been the fact with Mr. Maxwell, to a certain extent: otherwise, how could he have withstood, after all the terrible reverses he had encountered, the tidings that every thing that belonged to him, down to the smallest article of household furniture, had been seized by creditors, and that his darling daughter was driven out from a habitation—once so genial and happy—homeless and houseless? For had it not been for her prompt and foreseeing conduct, in taking possession of her mother's jewellery as well as of her own, with other portable and valuable things, she must have been wholly dependant on the charity of the two or three folks out of the multitude of those, that had in days of Mr. Maxwell's prosperity been fashionable friends, and who still had a small portion of commiseration in their natures. Sophia, however, as said above, prudentially and timorously armed herself with what was better than the professions even of commiserators:



viz., money or money's worth to a considerable amount; and thus provided, she betook herself to an unpretending lodging in a retired quarter of the metropolis, employing herself daily in ministering to the comfort of her father who had been so suddenly smitten to the ground from a lofty position. But, besides this filial occupation, she pursued another with the utmost assiduity and closeness; and this second vocation it must now be our business for a little space to describe and illustrate, the reader, of course, in some measure foretelling as with regard to the direction and earnestness of her activity.

It did not require any very great degree of caution and management on Miss Maxwell's part, to render herself a good and acceptable lodger with the widowed woman, in whose quiet house it was her luck to engage a tidy apartment,

A handsome sum in the way of rent, regularly and punctually paid every week, and by a beautiful young and *thoughtful* lady, who gave as little trouble as possible, would have been sure to command welcome and partiality. No third person living in the house, with the exception of the fatherless children, and the landlady—a woman of retreating manner as well as of sound sense, Sophia had little anxiety to cherish with regard to busybodies; and when she did confide to the widow certain circumstances in the history of her father's misfortunes, she whose ear was thus trusted and honoured, doubly sympathised with and admired her tenant. Not a word, of course, about Crawford's amour with the merchant's daughter—but enough, and just enough, concerning certain individuals that congregated in Conduit Street, who had served, by means of false pretences, to bring

Mr. Maxwell to the condition in which he was so disastrously involved.

"Will you assist me, Mrs. Lambert," asked Sophia of her landlady, "in ferreting out a few things I wish to make myself mistress of, respecting the names, past histories, and real circumstances of two of the individuals referred to?"

"Most willingly, my young lady, and proud to be employed by such a gentle and kind mistress," replied the landlady.

"Much circumspection will be required at both our hands, Mrs. Lambert; and for a time I must be unseen, or at least unknown in this business of keen research," was the remark of the young lady.

"Oh! nothing more agreeable to a female's nature, Miss Maxwell, than an office that requires the prying eye and the acute ear; so I am your woman," responded the really clever and experienced widow.

"It will be after nightfall, my good landlady, that I shall have to pursue a considerable portion of my research; and I purpose, for the sake of greater secrecy, to disguise myself at those times in a male garb, whenever I go out intent on an expedition of discovery."

"Oh! it matters not what or whose dress you assume, my sweet lady; for you must always look extremely interesting wherever you go, and whatever you assume. But if you will allow me, I should suggest that you make use of my Tom's Sunday suit, which would fit you well; and also that you give to your complexion as many of his shades as possible: the disguise might act well near to our own door of an evening, independently of more remote parts. We need not invite curiosity, nor make anybody the wiser in this neighbourhood," was Mrs. Lambert's hint.

"Happily thought of, and I shall follow your advice: the moment I need your personal services, Mrs. Lambert, or your future suggestions, we shall consult together," was the young lady's rejoinder.

Accordingly, and as planned, Sophia set to work with the most vigilant and prying vigour, evening after evening in Conduit Street; thus acting so long and frequently as not only to discover several of Crawford's favourite house-haunts, but his usual trysting spots in, or near to Hyde Park, where one and the same individual was sure to be, whenever her undoer proceeded thither of an evening. This was no other than the arch-villain Arnold—although Sophia was still in ignorance of his name, position, and character.

"He must," said she to her landlady, "be a prime mover of the young man with whose history and disposition I have had some means of becoming acquainted,—so long, so earnestly, so authoritatively does he engage the junior party. You must go with me, Mrs. Lambert, in order that I may, if possible, learn who and what this individual may truly be, that is so active with Crawford under the cloud of night."

Mrs. Lambert did her best; but after several long and winding trudgings at the heels of the practised and wily miscreant, somehow probably aware that he was dodged, he always contrived to give her the double or the slip; so that she would return to Miss Maxwell no wiser than when she set out.

Sophia, however, had been strung to such a pitch of resolute perseverance, and exhibited now

such a fecundity of resources in regard to the modes by means of which she might possess herself of a sufficient degree of knowledge relative to Crawford and his coadjutors, that there could be no doubt of her succeeding at last. Her first thought on becoming convinced that the *unknown* seemed to have suspicions when any one took the same route as he did, on leaving Hyde Park of an evening, was this, that her very best way was to go herself, in disguise—be it kept in mind,—up to the spot where the confabulations of the pair of gentlemen uniformly took place, and there to act the part of *even-dropper*. True, if detected, she believed it would be about the same as the loss of her life; for she had already satisfied herself that her undoer would scruple at nothing which bore upon his aims, were it even to shed her blood, should she prove a clumsy stumbling-block to his designs. Much caution and care were, therefore, needed; or what are fully as good in most exigences, cool tact and an easy impudence: she would place herself close to the tree to which they generally repaired, where she might either be entirely overlooked, or at most seen as a merely stranger boy, reclining after his gambols.

Accordingly, every evening for nearly a week she repaired at night-fall to the said tree; and there stretching herself upon the ground she would lie, adopting the manner of a boy who was taking his rest, and who had no further purpose at the time. It was unpleasant and irksome enough to make the damp earth her couch so oft, and for an hour or two each evening, affecting either to be sound asleep, or exceedingly tired. But a month of such pastime, even had the weather been ungenial and unkind, would have seemed to the young and delicate lady but a trivial sacrifice, when at length it had its contemplated reward, as was the fact in the case of this stratagem.

It was on a Saturday eve that Miss Maxwell acted the peculiar part for the last time, some three or four hundred yards in the rear of Apsley House. As on all the previous nights, a number of stout and agile boys pursued a somewhat riotous sport close by; and she had all along so conducted herself, that any person taking but a cursory notice of the entire group, could not but have considered the individual who figured in *Tommy Lambert's Sunday suit*, one of the gleesome and boisterous troop.

But it was not with a vague and unnoting gaze that the disguised young lady's eye travelled that Saturday eve; for she felt assured that she stood on the very threshold of, to her momentous disclosures. Her look was fixed on the entrance at which she had uniformly beheld Crawford's associate make his approach,—a man of good figure, and with a gait which she could have distinguished at a great distance, and in the midst of many. Her look, seldom veering, was to that distinct point; and lo! yonder he is with a deliberate and slow step,—the manner being that of a person who has weighty thoughts occupying him. Yes, he comes; and just as he nears the tree, the *disguised one*, wiping her brow, and panting, as if exhausted with the play, flings herself upon the soft dry turf that seems to court her pressure, not half-a-dozen of yards from the exact spot where the ruminating gentleman takes his stand.

Nothing more natural! If the man's soul be oppressed with crime, he must hate solitude and

shun it; or, if he be a lover of his kind and has a white soul, it must be a delight to him when brought within the circle of youthful hilarity and the things that bring to fond recollection the days that are gone, when he made the welkin to ring with his joy, and when the supple but tired limb desired no better resting-place than the green and sweet smelling sward on the borders of the playground.

The a-wearied *young* who has, as told, taken with panting speed and alacrity to the velvet ground, first covers the face with the handkerchief;—but anon, as footsteps resound in the prostrated ear, turns round so as to bury the face in the soft growth, and to obtain a more refreshing recline. All is natural and well done; nor is there ought to disturb or annoy the pair of bystanders who are so intent on private business of moment; for so did their colloquy on that Saturday eve indicate.

"Have you tarried long, Mr. Arnold? I find I'm a trifle behind the time."

"No not long, certainly; but why wait a moment at all? I have things of import to attend to, James—many things of weight and pressure: indeed, I have to work while you waste,—work most assiduously with my head, while you are squandering with your hands. But what is worse,—you are so thoughtless that you'll burst the bubble, long before our time has come round."

"Do you really mean to charge me with doing nothing, Mr. Arnold, in our very ticklish enterprise but squander? You must, I think, give me the credit at least of being an alert and lucky agent in executing what your older head originates. Must I give you instances of my docility and success? There was, for example, the money had out of old Maxwell."

"Stop, James; I do not charge you with either inactivity or want of tact in filching from fools and knaves their gold. But then you are everlastingly so near the brink of ruining us and our magnificent scheme wholly, by oversight or by rashness, that I am living in hourly fear not only as regards the prolongation of our great scheme, but as regards our opportunities of free agency. A pretty thing would it not, to be sent to a penal settlement in the South Seas? Why, how do you become or rest assured that that lustful slut, broken Maxwell's daughter, will not make the most damning use of the contents of my letter which she must have found in your pocket,—which letter successfully urged you on in the very nick of time, to cajole him out of his money? And now that our worthy Fitzgerald has gone back to his den at Bagshot, you have allowed him to carry away sundry documents and notes which should have been annihilated in the fire the moment they and your fingers parted company. You must hasten to Bagshot to-morrow morning, and endeavour to recover that letter especially, in which I suggested that the necessity might occur of sending the merchant's silly child,—useless thing,—to take a sleep. Dead men tell no tales, they say; and I believe it to be true. Be off by times, so as to catch Dimmock and his spouse at breakfast; take for her, vulgar brute, gaudy presents,—for him, pocket money, with the promise of a never-failing supply;—and for both plenty of brandy. If he will not by fair means deliver up the papers, you must ransack every corner of the house, the moment that the *spirits* masters them.

Having accomplished your mission, we have only to think of shutting Sophia's mouth should she ever be so foolish, for her own sake, as to blab."

"I shall do as you direct, my instructor," Crawford replied; "but for the future, since you are so offended with my negligence about the custody of your letters, it would be better that I knew where I could at all times meet with you. In that case, not only the putting into a tangible shape your views and orders would be avoided, but the trouble of repairing hither saved."

"James, the time is hardly yet ripe for what you so naturally and frequently urge. In a very short space, I propose that we domicile it together, as uncle and nephew would do, or parent and child. Meanwhile, be sure to make all right with Fitzgerald Dimmock, our most authentic possessor of millions, who has gone, forsooth, to watch over his Peninsular coffers," he added with a laugh.

The pupil and his instructor departed, and immediately separated. Sophia did not long thereafter embrace the grass. She arose: there was not a mortal in sight. "Enough for one night!" she ejaculated; "and now for the morrow!"

She sped her to Mrs Lambert's.

"Bless me, my sweet young lady!" exclaimed the landlady: "what has happened to you? You seem so strangely agitated. Controul yourself, my dear, otherwise, I should fear for your —;" the worthy woman observing not only the excitement which was like to master her lodger, but the strange sparkle and light that flashed in her lovely eyes, thinking that her mind was getting unsettled, stumbled at the word which would have fully expressed her sentiment.

Sophia made no direct reply, but shortly after said,—“I must to bed, for to-morrow I have to be early astir.”

She, who so lately was the maudlin, love-sick, and facile creature, has now in her soul a world of forecast things. Her ears had drunk in that evening matter for a night of intense rumination. Besides, she felt that unless she were alone by herself, the surges within would disclose more than she had a mind to unfold, even to the worthy woman who truly sympathised with her.

Next morning, according to the previous evening's understanding, Sophia arose at a very early hour; for she had determined to be at Bagshot, and away again, if possible, ere the arrival of Crawford in that neighbourhood: but she arose after a wholly sleepless night, apparently quite composed, to the joy of Mrs. Lambert. And yet, good woman, were you to dip deep into the young lady's heart, you would find, under the smooth surface, the long measured sweep and whelmings that usually succeed the riot of the actual storm; you would obtain an outlined view of a considered course, planned and meditated by that tender and frail flower of humanity, of such dimensions and compass, as would appal you—her mind's gaze being unwaveringly directed to, and fixed upon a momentous object.

As for you, James Crawford—and if you will, as for you also, the arch-plotter, Arnold—it might have been for your interests, had you not so fondly imagined, or laid the flattering unction to your souls, that you were to be no more troubled about her own and her father's wrongs at your hands. Think not that you have, wholly and for ever, got rid of her. And as little do you fathom her cha-

racter, when you suppose her incapable of contending with formidable circumstances; for she may yet awe you and keep you in a more enchained and awful state of bondage, than it is possible for you to establish towards her, though the unprotected and the bereft. James! she may yet hold the halter round your neck,—the volcano, at her bidding, may burst under your feet; so that, while she dreads, more than she does the image of death, the possibility of her dishonour being divulged, especially on account of her depressed and desolated father, she knows that you have still greater cause to dread her power, and the fate which a word of her's may evoke!

CHAPTER XXVI.

Meet guile by guile—deceit by stratagem:
Con plot to countermine intrigue—and use
The agents of the wicked and the vile
To minister to thine own purposes.

Unpublished Poem.

SOPHIA, with a prescience and a certitude to be looked for from female acuteness, so sharpened as her's had recently been, drove very nearly at once to Dimmock's door at Bagshot; for although she had been much exercised on the way with conjecture and doubt concerning many to her as yet mysterious points, she had not a shade of obscurity relative to whether Fitzgerald and this same resident on the heath, were the self-same person.

It was of a piece too with her character that she decked herself out of her exceedingly well furnished wardrobe, in exactly the same articles of dress and decoration in which she shone on the morning, when with her father and mother she appeared in Conduit Street to congratulate Crawford on his exploit at the fire, &c., as trumpeted forth in the newspapers; for while she doubted not that her rich appearance would bring to Dimmock's recollections a sufficiency to prove to him her identity, she was sure that she should instantly recognize him.

And, if possible, she looked more interesting in this, the day of her adversity than on that morn when all was sunshine and careering hope with her. It was a felicitous idea too, which, in a great measure had been suggested to her, when she lay at the foot of the Hyde Park tree, by the words of the overheard colloquy—to furnish herself with handsome presents for Dimmock and his coarse spouse.

Well, all these things preliminarized, let us escort her to the outer chamber of the Bagshot worthies, the man and his wife being at the moment seated at breakfast in the inner room.

"My stars, Dimmock! who can this be, so early in the day, and so helegant a young lady, with a grand set out?" were the first words which Sophia could decipher, ere the couple emerged from their chamber into the broader area of the front room.

"I have to ask you, good people, to forgive me, for thus intruding upon your privacy at such an early hour as this, seeing that I am an entire stranger to you, my good woman, and nearly equally so to your husband; but as I come with a friendly motive and not altogether without a friendly offering," (putting down a parcel of promising size at the same moment on the table which stood in the middle of the room,) "I trust our better acquaintance will speedily be established."

"Miss Maxwell! the beautiful Miss Maxwell!" exclaimed Dimmock, a man whose manners, when he chose, were as courteous as his observation was acute;—"can I believe my eyes? I only once before had the pleasure to behold you, and yet I should instantly single you out were you in an assembly of a thousand ladies. Pray, be seated, Miss: you must take breakfast after your morning drive immediately; and then we shall have a long conversation. Allow me to introduce to you my wife, Miss Maxwell, who, I know, is greatly flattered by your visit."

Sophia curtised and was curtying when the fat and waddling mistress of the house commenced with her loquacity, which we have not time to repeat. It may be enough to state that in the course of a few minutes there appeared to be such a perfect harmony in Dimmock's room between the parties, that the young lady had nothing to augur but success in as far as her mission thither was concerned.

Her first business-proceeding was to disclose the contents of the parcel, which, among a variety of very handsome articles, displayed some rich silks, of the nature of gown-pieces, shawls, stockings, &c.; and while Mrs. Dimmock was all exclamation in her own style of classicism, Sophia farther propitiated her, by saying, "I believe there is a bottle in the chaise, which it would be as well to have brought in;"—and away bounced Mrs. Dimmock to secure the Cognac. The lovely coxer then thrust into the hand of old Dimmock a quantity of gold pieces, adding, as she placed her finger on her lip, "Not a word of questioning now! I will speak my mind presently!"

Every thing went on as smoothly as Sophia's heart could desire, until she found the couple in such happy humour,—the brandy performing its part, that she deemed it safe to broach the theme which was the chief object of her journey and visit that morning, having already got through a great deal of matters in a marvellously short space, considering the loquacity of the matron of the house. It particularly favoured Sophia's ends, that Dimmock when in the character of Fitzgerald seemed never to have been made acquainted with one half of the facts relating to Crawford's connexion with her and her family. Moreover, he did not know that there was any misunderstanding between her and Crawford; nor was he aware of more than a temporary and partial embarrassment having overtaken her father's affairs. Besides, Dimmock looked and spoke in a manner which showed his impression to be that the young lady before him knew a good deal of the grand imposture which Arnold and Crawford were keeping up.

Only one important matter therefore had to be got over now. There were two contemplated on starting from London;—firstly, to ascertain positively and by the testimony of her own eyes, whether Fitzgerald and Dimmock were identical; and secondly, to get possession of Arnold's letter where it was proposed to send her to a never waking sleep. The first point was settled: there was only this second one to accomplish; and this done, to be off and away.

"By-the-bye, Sir," quoth Sophia,—having taken care all along not to call him either by one name or another,—“when with my Crawford last evening, he made me his entire confidant,—and he also mentioned a small parcel of letters which he had either mislaid, or supposed that you might

have put unheedingly into your carpet-bag. If such be the case that you took care of the letters, and have not burnt them, he would be obliged to you to let him have them back; and I shall willingly be the carrier."

"Burnt!" exclaimed old Dimmock, completely stunned; "I am sure the packet is not, for I have destroyed nothing; and if it be in my bag, you shall have it with all my heart. Still I have no recollection of stowing it away; although I must confess that I departed in such a hurry from London,—as I dare say James has told you,—that many things were forgotten or overlooked by me, which it would have been as well to have remembered."

Dimmock rummaged in the carpet-bag which stood in the room; and at length he handed two or three parcels of papers to Sophia, saying,—*"See, Miss Maxwell, if any of these contain letters addressed to your lover; your eyes are better than mine:"*—then to himself he muttered, *"How could James have possibly been so foolish as to tell her everything? I wouldn't trust a woman!"*

Sophia was not slow to obey the injunction she received; and before three minutes had elapsed, she said, *"This is the little packet referred to;"* for she had caught hold of the very document which the arch-imposter and his colleague would have expended thousands of pounds,—aye, spilt her very blood, rather than that it should come into her hands.

Her stay with the worthless couple was now very short. Yet ere stepping into the chaise, she, as if a new and correcting idea had suddenly come into her head, turned round and emphatically whispered to them these words:—"By the bye, on second thought, I would not, until you see me again, have you to give the slightest hint to Crawford or any of his friends, should you see them, that I have been here at all, or that you know anything about me further than what they themselves may communicate to you. Above all, not a syllable about parting with these letters: say you never had them,—that you destroyed them,—that you did anything but hand them over to me. I shall reward you handsomely if you observe my injunctions:—I'm sure I shall be a more punctual pay-mistress, than you will find either Arnold or Crawford pay-masters. Till I see you again, farewell!"

Having thus spoken, she was out of sight in a few moments,—fortunately, indeed, so far on her way towards London, that Crawford passed her some two miles from Bagshot.

However, he was riding at a rapid pace; so that had her business with the Dimmocks not been promptly transacted, there was no saying what untoward circumstances might have arisen to baulk her views.

Fortune, however, seemed to have taken quite a turn in her favour; and of this she was so sensible that she oft repeated to herself on her journey homeward such sentences as these:—"My star is in the ascendant, and my father shall yet be blessed. But woe to my undoer and his hellish counsellor, in tenfold proportion to my success. Now for Crawford! Before another day hath gone over his head, I will confront him: he shall be the trembler—the suppliant. Oh! I glory to think how I am about to hurl vengeance at him, and wield him as I will!"

But in the meantime the Dimmocks were quite

astounded by Sophia's parting words; for they perceived, when too late, that she had not been sent by Crawford for the letters. They therefore resolved to follow her injunctions, and say nothing on the matter, should they again see James; for as she had promised to reward them, they reflected that her purse might prove useful when the imposture, which still yielded them an allowance from the principals concerned in it, should have exploded.

The twilight hour of Monday eve was the appointed time when Sophia, once more in Tommy Lambert's Sunday suit, and accompanied by her worthy, willing, and serviceable landlady, repaired to the Mermaid Tavern, where Crawford, of late (to the young lady's perfect knowledge) had frequently dined; for the vengeful one hath said that another day's existence he shall not enter upon, without her having first confronted him.

Away then she sped, spirited on by the tidy and matronly Mrs. Lambert, the office of the latter being in case of *desperate* need, and not till then, to act as protector; but otherwise to remain at the bar of the tavern, while the *lad* (our heroine) pursued her course, in the parlour, or whatever apartment there might be in the tavern, where important business could be transacted by two persons alone. The bell-string was pulled, and the bell-call promptly answered:—

"Waiter, I believe Mr. Crawford is at dinner up stairs. Will you tell him that a person is waiting for him below, who has important business to go through with him, and that immediately!"

"Yes, sir;" and away hurried the waiter, never suspecting that the person whom he called "sir," was a fine woman in male attire.

A moment afterwards James Crawford stood gazing in the presence of, and firmly confronted by, the disguised.

"You seem somehow struck, Crawford," said Sophia; "as if you knew not who I am, or where you are. I am Sophia Maxwell, and in a boy's garb;"—and while uttering so much, she marched to the door, and placing her back to it, adding these words,—"You pass not me, sir, until I obtain satisfaction."

By this time Crawford had somewhat recovered from his surprise and the uncertainty he was at first in; for he thought he had beheld those features before; but where he could not at once say. Having recovered himself, and heard her bold announcement, his course was instantly to assume the tone dictatorial,—the bearing despotic: in short to threaten, to abuse, to scorn.

"And in disguise too,—in a male's breechings! Oh! thou shameless one! I shall call the whole household to hiss thee out, and in the streets the boys and the whelps will pursue thee." And upon this he made to push her aside, in order, no doubt, to make good his menace.

"Hold!" she said in her tersest, yet not exclamatory voice, at the moment snatching from her bosom a beautifully delicate and glittering dagger. "This, I know, it will be unnecessary for me to use on this occasion, either against thee or myself, for it is with words that I am now to pierce thee; yet I am prepared for the worst. *'And in disguise too!'* didst thou say? My disguise wrongs no one, and I wear it not often. *Thou to speak of disguise!*"

She paused, and scornfully scanned him from head to foot, and from foot to head again.

James began to wince.

"And, '*Oh, thou shameless!*' Yes, I have been the *shameless*, heaven knows," the word being spoken with an expression of visage as well as of voice, that was unutterably woeful. "And yet *thou* to speak of shame, who hast the shape of a man, living daily and hourly a life of shame! A goodly youth to look upon, and as thou hast come from the Creator's fashioning, able to work both with hand and head—and yet a *shameless*, unparalleled impostor! Fle upon thee!"

Again she gave him a moment's pause to reflect. She went on, the scornful passing into the scowling,—James the while shrinking, and about to essay an emollient, deprecating answer.

"Not a word, sir, till I have finished: and then only such as I shall dictate. Thou wast about to call the household, and so forth, to hiss and to hunt me. Move but one inch towards that end, and I call the inhabitants of this mighty Babel,—of the world, to pursue thee with hootings and curtings—for I am prepared every way. The silly wanton, Sophia Maxwell, is armed at all points, and is henceforth thy merciless sovereign. Nay, unless thou beseechest my forgiveness this instant, for the cowardly threat, thou goest not hence but as a felon, and to thy rightful prison-dungeon."

James was prompt to implore her not to do that which would benefit her not,—but most certainly lead to unpleasant disclosures. He had been hurried into the expressions, and was sorry for having made use of them.

"Just so," she answered: "nor do I wish, unless forced to it, to denounce thee publicly. The time is not yet come. But hear me out, for I must not long or idly talk to thee."

Sophia once more scanned him, and with such troubled feelings and looks as showed the struggles within, between blighted and fondly remembered affection, (they were a fond, faithful woman's remembrances)—and growing hate and fiendish revenge. A tear of softness and the curling of an awful brow contended; and James, reading aright the nature of the conflict, was about to make the best of the tenderer passion. But no!

"Keep back!" she cried, the tear retiring to its hardened casement, and a frightful, withering scowl taking entire possession of her face,—aye, and her very person, hitherto so soft and beautifully rounded, seemed to grow angular, edged, and rigid. "Thou hast but a few more words to hear from me at this time, and they are these:—The barrier between thee and me, James Crawford, is impassable even for the soul, which is a spirit, itself. We shall not herd together till with the fallen spirits, whose doom is everlasting. And yet the barrier that divideth us, will, so long as we breathe in this beautiful, but blighted world, bind us inseparably,—an iron, an adamant bond,—stern, immovable and stronger than the dungeon's bars and chains. It is the bond of mutual fear, of reciprocated dread, of a most interested and essential forbearance. I would not, as I value my dear father's life, have my shame made public; and thou dost not dare me to my utmost revenge, for the sake of thy own heart's blood and the lives of thy mother and sisters. Not a word shall pass my lips to endanger thee, so long as thou rightest me, and in the way that I shall dictate. I swear to this much, if thou shalt be true to thy part of the bargain: that is,

to spare my name, and do me such justice as I and thy conscience must enforce. Yet all the while and to the hour of death, I shall court the vengeful to thy utmost ruin,—pursue thee, haunt thee, expedite thy immortal part's passage to hell! Such shall be the dreadful bond that binds us."

By this time the girl seemed exhausted by the physical strenuousness to which she had been wrought:—but still more, no doubt, by the tearing passions within and the terribleness of her purpose. She paused,—she panted,—her lips went apart,—her loveliness became a pale, an ashy hue,—her eyes shot malignity.

Gradually her person became horribly troubled. The scowl of her countenance grew wilder,—she rose upon tiptoe,—the right arm was stretched heaven-ward,—the finger gave strange and hideous effect to the action; but it was not crowned until these fell words escaped her demoniac heart,—"*May the red bolt of Heaven strike thee to endless perdition for the deceit thou hast practised on me,—still worse, may'st thou not go to thy portion below till I—I have wrought out my revenge!*"

James quailed,—he shrunk,—he would have given worlds to have been freed from her mastery. She spoke for the last time at this interview, and these were her utterances:—

"To-morrow, at this hour,—no, let it be on the evening after—be thou here, to place upon that table the thousands, with interest, which thou didst filch from my poor father, on the day that so much noise was made about thy fire-escape exploit. I give to the evening after to-morrow, for I know that thy leader Arnold must be consulted; and him thou can'st not so certainly at an hour's notice discover as I can. Now, thou knowest the hour and the day,—the sum and the unalterable demand. Sayest thou yes, or no?"

"Yes! yes!" cried James with matchless impatience and alacrity.

"I know it,—you dare not otherwise. And now begone!"

James Crawford sped from the tavern parlour that eve with quicker steps than he had entered it, but crouching and trembling like a lashed hound.

CHAPTER XXVII.

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy?
What art can wash her guilt away?

GOLDSMITH.

Six months had now glided away since the commencement of Crawford's imposture on a credulous world.

The scene once more changes to Southampton. Since the date of the last conversation between Arnold and Emily, which we detailed in a previous chapter, her feelings had never been of the most pleasurable nature: and when she could no longer conceal from herself the alarming truth that she was likely to become a mother, a variety of contending sentiments rent her bosom. The only light that beamed upon the sad clouds of her fortune, was the pleasing idea that she could soon fondle and caress a counterpart of him she loved. But what poor consolation was this, when she was compelled to reflect on the disgrace that would accrue to her, in the eyes of the world!

The pledge of her fatal love for Arnold—the offspring of their illicit amours, would shortly publish her frailty; and the exposure would perhaps be a severe blow to the heart of the tender and unsuspecting Mrs. Crawford. How distressed would be that doating mother—a mother so jealous of her daughter's reputation! The thought was distracting—it was replete with despair. She sat in her chamber, the image of woe—affliction personified. Not a tear, however, stole down her pallid cheek—not a drop glistened in her eyes:—her grief—her agony—was too acute to allow her to obtain relief by weeping. She saw nothing but ruin, infamy, and disgrace before her. Various had been the letters she had at different times received from Arnold, each one colder than the former: she therefore began to doubt the sincerity of his love; and wild—almost without a hope, she seated herself at the writing-table, and penned the following letter—a letter that would have melted any heart save that of the arch-miscreant Arnold:—

"To you, dear Stanley, I now address myself—I throw myself upon your mercy—your honour—your pity! If you reject the supplication of the wretched Emily, you will kill—you will cast into the grave of infamy, the tomb of disgrace, a being that was pure and innocent until your fatal love—your ardent promises were the cause of her undoing. Yes—I can no longer persuade myself that our amour will remain concealed:—for some time have I suspected—I am now convinced that my bosom contains that which will briefly bear awful witness against me; and though its voice be mute at its birth—still will it rise, and thunder my frailty forth to a hard and inflexible world—a world that makes no allowances—permits no extenuation—for a fault like mine. You know this is true: you are aware it is not exaggeration. Shall the child, then, be born in sin—that child so soon to call thee father?

"I now appeal to the omnipotence of God—to the majesty of heaven, to touch your heart and induce you to fly to her, who is already your spouse in the sight of the ruling power whom I reverence—so that your child may not be stigmatised at its birth! If you do not take some immediate step, despair will kill your Emily:—*but am I still your Emily?*

"Yes—despair will reduce me to commit—Oh! I cannot pen the word—my fingers refuse to trace the odious syllables—my heart recoils from the idea! Still I could not support so burthened an existence. 'Tis you that have for ever, perhaps, destroyed my worldly hopes of happiness: you have hurled me from the pinnacle of innocence to the abyss of woe—you have sullied my name—you have tasted selfish happiness, and have left the shame to me as my portion. Till you came, was I not pure? till you made such earnest vows and overcame my too confiding virtue, could I not look the world in the face, and boldly challenge it to impute to me the slightest deviation from virgin pride? 'Tis you, Arnold—I must repeat again—again—and still again: for you cannot—you dare not deny it—'tis you that are the source of my afflictions. The reparation is yet easy—do not delay it. If you do, fearful will be the consequences. I can never lift my glance to the countenance of my poor mother; my aunt notices my paleness—Mr. Hunter daily endeavours to console me. Besides, how shall I be able to conceal my situation longer from him; for the searching and experienced eye of a surgeon must speedily detect me! Save, before such an event can happen—save, Oh! save the reputation of your affectionate—but heart-broken

"EMILY!"

To this touching appeal an answer was returned by Arnold in the course of two or three days. He promised to take some decided step within a fortnight, and begged Emily to console herself till that period; for he was not only annoyed at the contents of her epistle, but was also grieved and embarrassed—fearful lest a breach should take place between him and James, by which he would lose the benefit of that individual's imposture.

The reply to Emily was far from satisfactory to this unfortunate victim of his treachery. Still

she was obliged to submit to his directions, and conceal as well as she could the chagrin that oppressed her, as also the increasing rotundity of her person. But the agonized feelings she stifled in the presence of her aunt, were always recognised by the eye of Hunter: as yet, however, he had no idea of Emily's real situation.

"I have sworn to you an eternal friendship," said that young man one day,—*"and I must venture to enquire the reason of the sorrow which you cannot veil from me. Is it that Mr. Arnold is tardy in fulfilling his promises of marriage? is it that he has quitted you for another?—tell me—for business will oblige me to visit London shortly; and if I can be of service, you know you may command me to the utmost."*

"I shall trouble you with a letter for Mr. Arnold: you must see him—you must remind him of my love for him—of my constant affection: but you must not say, Henry, that it is by my solicitation you interfere—that would only annoy him," added Emily, scarcely able to conceal her tears.

"I comprehend," returned Hunter. "I will call on Mr. Arnold, and in the course of conversation shall take the opportunity of speaking upon your love—your melancholy. Oh! Emily—what would I give to see you happy! what would I not do—what would I not sacrifice for your sake? And do you know—can you imagine that excess of misery has often driven me to seize the glittering razor, or the phial of poison—"

"Henry—Oh! Henry—talk not thus!" exclaimed the agonized girl, with a wild look fixed upon the young man's face.

"'Tis true!—'tis consolation, moreover, to tell thee my griefs!" returned the young surgeon mournfully.

"And when do you leave for London?" enquired Emily, desirous of changing the conversation—for she was terrified by his manner.

"The day after to-morrow. But were I not compelled by particular business to repair to the metropolis, I would tarry here—near you, Emily—whom I esteem as a friend, as a sister. Unfortunately my absence may be long—probably four or five months: I shall therefore have an opportunity of seeing Mr. Arnold frequently—and nothing, which the tongue of persuasion can utter, shall be spared."

"And my gratitude will be eternal," responded Emily; for she felt herself under a thousand obligations to this admirable young man, from whom she received consolation, and whose melancholy rendered him so peculiarly interesting.

When he had said his last adieu to Emily on the morning of his departure, and when the din of the wheels of the post-chaise that conveyed him to London, had ceased to dwell in her ears, she found herself desolate, and forsaken by a kind friend;—she the more especially felt the loneliness of her situation, when such a friend was necessary to while away by his conversation the tedious hours;—and, as she reflected on the future, by comparing it with the last few months of her life, she ceased to wonder that Henry had often seriously contemplated suicide!

The more she gave scope to the gloom of her ideas, the more wretched and hopeless appeared her lot: she feared to meet an offended parent—an innocent sister; she dared not now anticipate a

change in Arnold's plan of delay—and she was haunted with the most cruel suspicions of his fidelity. Unfortunately, as her poor heart was ready to burst, and despair was depicted in her eye with awful wildness, a small bottle, upon the mantel, met her view:—the contents had frequently been applied to by her aunt—on it was labelled “Laudanum.” Hastily she seized it—did not pause to ponder—but poured out into a glass the remains of the fatal liquor.

Then, suddenly recollecting herself, and armed with the courage and coolness of despair, though still bent upon self-destruction, she sate down to pen a line—a farewell line to her distressed—her poor mother, ere she swallowed the poison which, she resolved, should end all her cares, and all her sorrows!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It is not every one, that is barely initiated into Freemasonry, that is intrusted with all the mysteries thereto belonging; they are not attainable as things of course, nor by every capacity.

Use and Abuse of Freemasonry, by CAPTAIN SMITH.

ONE of Crawford's most intimate friends was a certain Mr. Pearson—a gentleman about town, of whom no very great harm can be said, nor yet any great amount of good. He was a perfect gentleman, possessing a competency, well-known, and well-received in all the fashionable circles of the metropolis. Being a man of the world, he easily suited his behaviour and conversation to the dispositions of those with whom he associated. To the ladies he was ever attentive and amusing, avoiding egotism with peculiar tact, and always agreeing to what they said, even were it the greatest nonsense. To the old men he was respectful and polite, talked about the corn-laws, the state of the country, and the bill then before parliament, till he won the hearts of all the fathers of the families he was acquainted with. Amongst the mothers, he enquired after their children, took the favourite brat upon his knee, kissed it, although its nose might want wiping, and its mouth was covered with butter, and declared it was the most interesting little thing he had ever seen, besides its being exactly like Pa. Still a bachelor, about two-and-thirty, and not bad-looking, he could have married to considerable advantage; but he preferred the free and easy life of a single man, unhackled by other bonds.

Such was the individual with whom Crawford frequently associated. By his means he obtained introductions to some of the best houses at the West End; and in return he was never satisfied unless Pearson made his (Crawford's) house his home. Of course James's expenses were enormous: the debts he daily contracted in various places, were alarming. Still the deeper he ran, the greater was the trust reposed in him. Not a tradesman in London would stay with an ordinary customer when Crawford entered his shop: he would instantly run to serve the Youthful Impostor. Numberless presents also were sent him by various traders, as samples of articles they wished him to purchase, thereby imitating the conduct of Mr. Wright.

James had frequent interviews with Arnold, and always handed over to him the best portion of those sums he was constantly employed in raising by the medium of Mr. Nathaniel and hundreds

of accommodating money-lenders, who sincerely kept the secret for their own sakes. The daily papers teemed with descriptions of the elegant entertainments given by Mr. Crawford, the circles of fashion he visited, and the direction he pursued during his daily rides. Had he been an ambassador from the Cherokee Indians, he could not have excited more curiosity.

But let us return especially to Mr. Pearson.

“This evening,” said that gentleman to Crawford, as they were over their wine after a *tete-a-tete* dinner in Conduit-Street, “I will conduct you, my boy, to a curious meeting, to which I can introduce you: 'tis a set of rare fellows; they are called *The Society of Bricklayers*, and have as many mysterious signs as possible.”

“Are you one of the number?” enquired James.

“Yes—will you be initiated?”

“Nothing would give me greater pleasure,” replied Crawford. “It is, of course, a respectable body, Pearson?”

“Indeed it is—and considerable benefit may accrue to the initiated during circumstances of distress or difficulty.”

“What is the origin of this institution, then?” asked Crawford.

“On that head I will offer a few remarks. There is a somewhat learned work, entitled, ‘*Society of Bricklayers Dissected*,’ written by one Pritchard, who made oath by affidavit before a magistrate, that it was a true and correct account in every instance. He traces the origin of the society to the building of the Tower of Babel, from which epoch, says he, the principles were carefully handed down by Euclid to the chief architect of Solomon's Temple, whose name was Eiram. But my worthy Mr. Pritchard was in error; for certainly the confusion of languages, and the anachronism he is guilty of in placing the date of Euclid's existence before that of Solomon's Temple, refute his arguments. Now Captain Smith, Grand Master of Kent, tacitly acknowledges that the origin of the society is connected with the religion of the Druids—a statement or confession I am myself inclined to believe. Yet Smith, in another portion of his work, seems to hint that the Society of Bricklayers is as old as the Bible date of the creation of man.* At the same time, the words made use of for signs, by the two inferior degrees, are the names of the two pillars at the gate of Solomon's Temple.”†

“And what are they?” asked Crawford.

“Patience—patience, my dear fellow—you shall know more this evening: I am not at liberty to unveil all the secrets of the brotherhood. The real fact is,” continued Pearson, lowering his voice, although no one else was present, “that very few of the Bricklayers understand anything at all of the principles of their society, save the signs. There is no doubt, however, but that we may safely trace its origin to the Druids, and to certain superstitious notions concerning the sun. The catechism to-night will explain the meaning of this last remark, and also why we keep our grand festival on St. John's day.”

* When the Sovereign Architect raised, on masonic principles, the beautiful globe, and commanded that master science, Geometry, to lay the planetary world, and to regulate by its laws the whole stupendous system of this universe, &c., &c.

The Use and Abuse of Freemasonry

† Boaz and Joachim.



"St. John's day!—that is Midsummer's day," exclaimed Crawford.

"Exactly! Cannot you now perceive why I imagine our customs to be essentially connected with the adoration of heavenly bodies?"

"I can. But proceed:—you interest me."

"I have little more to say in remark upon the subject. One thing, is however curious—that all lodges, built expressly for the reception of Bricklayers (because, you know, some meetings take place in hotels and taverns), are erected with their faces towards the east, and their backs towards the west: this is emblematical of the passage of the sun in the ecliptic from one cardinal point: o the other. Besides, the Smith I before alluded to, declares that numbers of our mysteries are borrowed from the Persians. Indeed, upon the ceilings of those lodges which are built, as I just now said, for the express purpose, the solar system is generally depicted. By the bye, when

talking about the pillars of Solomon's Temple, I might have informed you, that on the parchment certificate of the Society, which all members have, there are drawings of certain pillars. But we may at present think of moving."

James and his friend Pearson put on their upper-coats, for the evening was cold, and sallied out into the wide streets of London. As they had not very far to go, they were contented to walk. Pearson led the way in silence: Crawford spoke not either, being intent on the interesting event about to take place.

Presently Pearson stopped at the door of a large building, and was admitted with Crawford into an extensive hall, at the end of which was a small door, closed. Pearson stepped up to this door, which was opened by an individual, who beckoned him to enter. Pearson desired James to wait a few minutes in the hall, until his return. Then you promised obedience; and his friend hastened to

into the lodge, having previously put on his apron, which was made of white leather, lined with azure silk. On the leather, or outside, were four stars, also of the same coloured silk—and the trowel, level, and plumb-rule.

James had not long to wait: in about a quarter of an hour Pearson again appeared.

"You can be admitted this evening," said he; "I must therefore tutor you how to act, and what replies you are to make to the various questions that will be asked of you."

Crawford listened with attention, and carefully kept the lessons in his memory.

"Are you prepared?" inquired Pearson.

"Perfectly," was the answer.

"I told you to bring your baptismal certificate—you have it?"

"Yes—here it is."

"And you recollect all I have told you?"

"To the letter," replied James.

"Well—do not be alarmed at being blindfolded—no one will injure you. After the ceremony of your initiation, you will be pleased at having passed through it: at present I can say no more."

With these words, Pearson again knocked at the door, and was admitted, Crawford following him, into a small saloon, at the end of which there was another door, closed. The porter of the one through which they had just passed, desired Crawford to lay aside his coat, waistcoat, and neckcloth, an injunction that was instantly obeyed. The same porter requested him to surrender all the money he had with him, which was also complied with; for Pearson had previously informed his young friend of these preliminaries. Last of all, James's eyes were carefully blindfolded with a handkerchief—an operation that caused him to shudder slightly for a moment.

But Pearson whispered a word of encouragement in his ears; and having caused the entrance of the lodge to be opened, he led Crawford into the apartment where the meeting was held.

All was silent, till the voice of the Master, who was seated in the east, demanded of the Tiler, or Warden in the west, "if the lodge were carefully secured?" To this a reply in the affirmative was given; and Crawford was led by Pearson up to the presence of the Master.

After a few preliminary questions and formalities, the Master inquired of the youth, "How the lodge was situated?"

"East and West," was the prompt reply.

"Wherefore?"

"Because the sun first appears in the east, and he departs in the west, when his course is run," answered Crawford.

"Where sits the Master?"

"In the east."

"And where the Tilers?"

"In the west."

"Why?"

"Because," responded James, "the Master opens the lodge in the east, as the sun heralds in the day from that point; and the Tilers close the lodge in the west, even as the sun leaves our hemisphere to darkness in that horizon."

"Tis well. What is the sign for the Master on opening the lodge in the morning?" pursued his interrogator.

"He stands in the east, with the square suspended from his neck, and with his right hand upon his left breast."

"And what is the sign for the Wardens?"

"They stand in a similar position, with the level and plumb-rule about their necks."

"And what is the duty of the Master in the morning, on opening the lodge with the presence of the sun?"

"To set the men to work," was the reply.

"What, then, is the duty of the Tilers in the evening?"

"To dismiss and pay the men that which is their due—the result of their labours."

"So far 'tis again well," continued the Master.

"You wish to be initiated in the mysteries and ancient rites of Bricklayers?"

"I do—'tis the height of my ambition."

A few other questions ensued, to which Crawford replied with readiness, composure, and a properly modest assurance. The Master then said, "Will you pay the necessary fees?"

"Willing'y—but I am unable," returned James.

"And wherefore are you thus unable?"

"Because they have taken my money away from me."

"Do you, then, hope to gain admission to the lodge?"

"I flatter myself I may be admitted, even without the money."

"What does that evince? some useful moral, doubtless," proceeded the examiner, himself becoming rather fatigued of the formal ceremony.

"The circumstance shows," answered Crawford, with a little hesitation, "the vanity of wealth; and that riches are not essential as a means of procuring introduction to the mysterious and ancient rites—or to a knowledge of them more properly speaking—"

"That will do," interrupted the Master: the reply was not quite correct—it however passed without comment, for Crawford had responded to all the other interrogations so satisfactorily, particularly as their formula is very perplexing, that the catechism here concluded with the usual ceremonies, from which the veil cannot be drawn aside.

Presently the handkerchief was taken from Crawford's eyes—a new light beamed in upon him—amazed for a moment bewildered his senses; but he was a member of the Society, and was reminded by the Master, that he now saw a representation of the world! His friend Pearson was ready to congratulate him—his money had been returned, and the fees were paid.

When the lodge was closed for the evening, the two friends separated, each returning to his own abode.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Thy doom is named!

Corsoir.

FROM a variety of circumstances, the trial of Rivingstone did not come on till about this time. Our readers will be pleased to recollect that the tale opened in the blooming but sultry month of June; they will also remember, that up to the present moment we have related events which either occupy or include a space of nearly seven months.

It is now, therefore, December, when Rivingstone stands at the bar of the Old Bailey, capitally indicted for highway robbery with violence. But he seemed, as it were, unmoved—confident in the success of Sir George Mornay's promised influence to obtain a mitigation of any sentence passed upon him. We shall not, however, dwell minutely upon the subject; suffice it to say that Captain Stewart, who deemed this prosecution to be a duty which he owed to society, gave evidence against the criminal; and Rivingstone was condemned to suffer the extreme penalty of the law.

A slight tremor was alone observed to agitate his frame, as the judge pronounced in a solemn and impressive tone the terrible sentence which awaited the malefactor: and the doomed one walked back to the dungeon with a firm step and an undaunted mien.

When he was once more alone in his cell,—for at the period of which we are writing, it was not customary, as is now the case, to place turnkeys constantly with a man condemned to death,—he could not help looking with regret at the incidents of his past life,—not however with remorseful feelings, but in a kind of subdued rage at the idea that thick walls separated him from the pleasures of the gay world without. The once bold highway-man was changed to a condemned criminal. He remembered the period when his pockets were filled with coin—when his little house at Hounslow was stored with luxuries—and when his thoughts were unshackled by aught disagreeable. Now he saw in himself a doomed malefactor—about to suffer, perhaps, an ignominious death, or to be sent across the seas to foreign climes. But he still clung to the hope that Sir George Mornay would manage to save him from a scaffold; and this impression served to cheer his mind in the gloomy goal. Next to him, and also in a condemned cell, was another individual cast for death, who was apparently as reckless as himself; for he whiled the time away by chaunting catches of various songs, expressive of the life he had led—the principles of his former companions—the variety of their professions, and the fidelity that existed between them.

The strange harmony thus raised by his neighbour, who sang those abominable slang songs in a very pleasing, and even melodious voice, had the effect of lulling Rivingstone early to sleep. When the morning came, he rose with the hope of receiving some tidings from Sir George Mornay, who, he was perfectly convinced, must have heard of his condemnation: but the whole of that day passed—and no one came. On the ensuing one, he managed by the aid of a couple of guineas, which he had secured about his person, to bribe the turnkey to carry a note to Portland-Place, and to wait for an answer. The messenger returned, with a verbal reply, to the effect that Sir George was not at home, but that he was shortly expected. Rivingstone was indeed anxious at this moment. Mid-day passed—still no one came. At length two o'clock sounded from Saint Sepulchre's church;—and in a few minutes Arnold was admitted into the doomed one's cell.

"It is some few weeks since I saw you last!" exclaimed Rivingstone, delighted, at the re-appearance of his old friend.

"Yes—I have been out of town on particular

business, or I should have called as regularly as was my wont," returned the crafty deceiver.

"And Sir George Mornay—will he stand staunch to his word, do you think?" enquired the criminal, with visible anxiety pictured on his features.

"He has to my certain knowledge been in Scotland for these six weeks past!" was the lie that Arnold invented, as he did not wish any one to interfere in Rivingstone's behalf, for certain reasons of his own.

"Yet I sent a note this morning: the reply was that he was out, but was expected to return shortly," responded the convict, gasping for breath.

"Oh! then he may be expected to-day, for aught I know," observed Arnold.

"Are you acquainted with his address in Scotland?" demanded Rivingstone, a pallor overspreading his countenance, and his tongue articulating quickly, for life and death seemed to be in the reply.

This was an awful crisis for the schemes of Arnold: he would not that Rivingstone should be driven to confess all he knew; neither would he that Sir George Mornay should endeavour to obtain a commutation of his sentence.

"I do not know his address," answered the deceiver; and he watched narrowly the criminal's countenance.

"Then I am lost!" exclaimed Rivingstone:—"yes—irreversibly lost—I am a doomed man!" and he clasped his hands together in agony. "There is but one means," continued he in another moment, somewhat more coolly; "but that I would never resort to: no—if I die, I will be staunch, by God!"—and he hit his hand with violence upon the table, while his chains made a horrible rattling; so that even the flinty heart of Arnold was slightly touched, though only for an instant.

At that precise period, the neighbouring prisoner's voice struck upon the ear of Rivingstone. The man was chaunting some verses of a flash song, which denounced with bitter imprecations and also in obscene terms, any one who might "turn nose upon a pal."*

This was sufficient to arouse the energies of Rivingstone's naturally powerful mind.

"No—by the thunders of the Almighty!" he exclaimed in a loud and emphatic tone, while Arnold listened with his usual calmness, "may the vengeance of the Eternal come upon me, if I betray my friends; and although I take it unkindly that Crawford has never been—"

"When you consider," interrupted his companion, "that James's success most materially depends upon his circumspection, you can excuse that apparent want of attention."

"You are right—I forgive him," returned the criminal. "But," proceeded he, after a moment's pause, "I will never meet the gaze of an assembled crowd. Arnold, you must do for me the last favour that can be rendered to me in this world."

"I will—and almost divine it," said the arch-miscreant.

"Remember," continued the poor fellow, whose merit was certainly great in not endeavouring to save his own life by an exposure of his friends—"remember, that I die for you—yes, by God! you must assist me!"

* Inform against an accomplice,

He bent his head to Arnold's ear, and whispered in a firm voice, "I want poison!"

"You shall have it," returned the other, while a fiend-like expression of satisfaction was spread over his countenance, despite of himself. It was momentary, and escaped the observance of Rivingstone, who did not for an instant imagine the treachery of his pretended friend.

"To-morrow—suspense is dreadful," said the doomed man.

"I will obey you;"—and Arnold bade a temporary adieu to his *quondam* companion in villany and crime.

Let us pause here to reflect upon the conduct of this extraordinary and mysterious individual. It was in his power, it appears, to obtain the interest of Sir George Mornay, who was not in Scotland, but in London at this period, for the benefit of Rivingstone: but when he was aware that Rivingstone was staunch and determined, he cared not how soon he was separated from the world, and from the ability of ruining himself and Crawford in after-life. Seldom has a more complete villain disgraced the annals of history. The dreadful crimes over which he had to retrospect, raised no remorse in his obdurate heart. Even the recollection of that awful deed, whose locality was marked by the mile-stone on the Hounslow road—the seduction of Emily—the deceptions practised on the credulity of a confiding mother—the devices he employed to make Crawford subservient to his infamous machinations—the ruin of that young man—and the abandonment of Rivingstone, his friend, his accomplice, as it were,—all these were rather to him subjects of exultation, than matters of alarm and regret. Secure in his own cunning and subtlety, he feared not the attack of the violated laws of his country. Whether he looked backward or forward, he was equally calm; whether he contemplated the distressed state of Emily, or the horrid feelings that must eventually fill Mrs. Crawford's heart, when she would learn of a son's villany, and a daughter's disgrace—not a sentiment of remorse touched him!

As he was walking along Oxford-Street on some business, after his interview with Rivingstone in Newgate, he met an individual, with whom he thought he was acquainted: they spoke—it was Mr. Hunter.

"I should have done myself the pleasure of calling at your hotel, Mr. Arnold, this very day, had I not thus fortunately encountered you," said the surgeon.

"A thousand thanks—I shall be ever glad to pay you any attention, when it is in my power," returned the deceiver, with that blandness of manner often so peculiar to him. "But do you purpose making a long stay in the metropolis, if the question be not impertinent?"

"I fear, some time," was the reply.

"How did you leave Miss Crawford?" enquired Arnold.

"As you are a friend to the family, Mr. Arnold," returned Hunter emphatically, "I must tell you that she is melancholy and unwell. Latterly a secret sorrow has weighed heavily upon her soul: I am ignorant of its source—and yet—she weeps—she sits for several minutes together without seeming to regard any thing, save the wretched ideas that fill her bosom. Seldom is it that I have seen so dreadful an alteration in a young

and beautiful girl, whose temperament ought to be healthy!"

"And do you think that the cause of this can be so very serious, Mr. Hunter?" demanded Arnold, with the air of a person soliciting information on a dubious point.

"I am at a loss to divine—unless, if you will allow me to hint my suspicions," answered Henry, in a hesitating tone of voice.

"Doubtless—speak, I pray you," said Arnold.

"It has struck me she is in love: indeed, although I just now affected ignorance of the fact, I am convinced of it! Too well aware of that passion's symptoms, Mr. Arnold, it were strange, had I not recognised them in her deplorable state of a heart-breaking woe."

"But with whom can she be in love?" enquired Arnold carelessly. "She is kept somewhat as a recluse with her aunt at Southampton."

"Ah! Mr. Arnold, if I were not too bold—if I were permitted to express my opinion without disguise or restraint to your ears——"

"Certainly: proceed."

"Then, it is with *you* that she is in love," returned the young man vehemently, as he watched the other's countenance, which underwent no change; for the arch-deceiver was amply prepared.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Arnold, after a moment's apparent thought on this disclosure: "I cannot say that I ever gave her cause to suppose that this passion was mutual."

"Oh! say not so!" exclaimed Hunter. "And yet I must believe you! But perhaps you were scarcely aware that she may have construed every kind look of your's into one of affection—every tender syllable into the language of love. I myself have long, long imagined that your heart was her's, as her's is yours. I fancied those two hearts beat reciprocally—I supposed that your eyes met too often, to speak the words of cold friendship. Gracious God! what misery might have been spared, if——" and he hesitated, sighed, and was silent.

"I am sorry that you, so energetic a pleader in the courts of love——" said Arnold, almost contemptuously.

"Where I first became acquainted with wretchedness myself," added the young man with a bitter smile.

"I am sorry" continued Arnold, not heeding the interruption, "that you should have so misinterpreted the friendship I bear for every member of the Crawford family. It is far more probable that I should regard Miss Emily as my daughter or sister, than as one destined to be my wife."

"Oh, Mr. Arnold, she loves you—she adores you!" cried Hunter in an impassioned tone. "Yes—all I tell you is true, as the gospel is true! What are your intentions? I speak as a friend to her—she has excited a profound interest in my heart—an interest on her account, that makes me bold as I address you, and would make me endeavour to touch your feelings; for my heart bleeds to witness her sufferings."

"The English tongue is stored with tender phrases," remarked Arnold ironically.

Hunter heeded him not, but proceeded to dwell upon the sorrows of Emily—sorrows which he depicted to the life.

Suddenly Arnold, wearied with the conversation, and afraid of attracting the notice of individuals

passing in the street, some of whom might perhaps know him—and he had particular reasons to induce him to avoid any recognition on their part at this instant:—Arnold, we say, hastily declared that his business was pressing; and having given Hunter his card, with an invitation to call at his hotel in a few days, he took leave of so importunate an acquaintance.

But the poor young man had said no more than he really felt. Deep was the sympathy he entertained for the woes of Emily; great were the sacrifices he would have made to insure peace to her distressed mind.

When Arnold left him, Henry stood for some time in the street, irresolute what course to pursue; when suddenly a thought struck him, that he would call upon Crawford, whose address he had. Unfortunately the youth was not at home; Hunter however left a card—for James had heard of him in the letters which he had occasionally received from Emily, but in which there was never a word referring to her love, nor to her sorrows.

Hunter hastened back to his lodgings to pen an epistle to her. Poor girl! little did he suspect what a fatal course she had resolved to take while he was on his road to London!

The behaviour of Arnold had wounded and astonished him. He thought there was too much levity and coolness in his manner, when speaking of Emily. He trembled for the happiness of that beautiful victim of disappointed love; and as he, in his devotion, breathed a prayer to his God, he knew not that the day before she had determined to rid herself for ever of life's insupportable cares!

CHAPTER XXX.

Good honest men, who met to guard their wealth,
And save their stores from the adventurer's grasp;
Not to amass with niggard hand a heap
Of useless coin, to be secur'd in chests,
And feast the eyes of meagre avarice;
But to be portion'd for their children's welfare,
With prudence and correct economy.

Anonymous.

.... Quoi, toujours marcher de crime en crime!
Ah! je suis fatigué de vivre sur l'abîme!

M. Joux.

A FEW evenings after the initiation of James Crawford in the art and mystery of the Bricklayers, his friend Pearson called for him at about nine o'clock, and invited him to visit the Tradesmen's Protection Society. Pearson fully developed the nature and objects of this association; but it is unnecessary to record the explanation at present, inasmuch as a detailed account of the proceedings of the assembly will be almost immediately given. On their arrival at the tavern,* where the society was accustomed to meet, Pearson enquired for the porter; and that individual shortly after made his appearance. He bowed profoundly upon recognising Pearson; and still lower was his obsequious *salaam*, when a sovereign greeted his hand.

"William," said Pearson, "you must put my friend and myself into the little room adjoining the public one; for this gentleman,"—indicating Crawford,—"*is* curious to be initiated in all the secrets of a London life.

"Very well, Sir," was the reply; "you are

* The association referred to in this chapter, held its meetings at a tavern in Cockspur-Street at the time of which we are writing: we do not know where the place of assembly now is.

quite welcome; only take particular care not to make a disturbance; and all will be right. But I need scarcely stand to repeat these injunctions to you, Mr. Pearson," added the old man, with a significant nod and wink.

"When do they assemble to-night?" asked Pearson.

"In about half an hour, Sir," was the reply.

William showed the way up-stairs, and opened a door which led into a spacious room, already lighted up with a profusion of candles. A large table was in the middle, around which were seats adapted to the accommodation of a hundred and twenty or thirty persons. At the farther end of this table a chair was raised somewhat higher than the rest, evidently intended for the president of the society. There was no carpet upon the floor; neither was there anything indicative of luxury or ostentatious show.

The old porter conducted Pearson and Crawford into a little parlour, which adjoined the larger apartment, and which was accommodated with a pane of glass, about a foot square, in the partition separating the two rooms. A faded green curtain was drawn over this aperture: but two or three small holes had been perforated in the drapery by the handy fingers of Mr. Pearson on a former occasion.

William again requested that the two friends would remain perfectly quiet: then having supplied them with a couple of bottles of wine, cigars, glasses, and a taper, he retired to his duty.

Not long after his departure, the members of the Tradesmen's Protection Society began to make their appearance. They were like the generality of tradesmen, respectable-looking, decently clad, unassuming in their manners, sedate in their appearance, and few of them under forty; for the more youthful ones, being through want of experience less seriously inclined, seldom attended the meeting, doubtless preferring to pass the evening with their friends over a jovial glass.

When sixty, or thereabouts, had assembled, the President entered and took his seat on the elevated chair at the end of the table, with all due dignity. Meantime James and Pearson observed all that was passing from the convenient window before mentioned.

Shortly after the President was seated, a waiter came in and supplied the company with punch, glasses, pipes, tobacco, cigars, and other articles necessary to conviviality; for the meetings were not so formal as the reader may have imagined. Having arranged these things upon the table, the domestic withdrew. A few healths having been proposed and drunk, the President rose and addressed the party present.

His speech was plain, his words judiciously selected, and his language not inelegant; for let me assure those who vaunt an University education, and who suppose that talent alone exists with aristocracy, that there is scarcely so well-informed and so sensible an order in society, as the respectable portion of tradesmen. Many, many individuals of this class possess more sound understanding, and have read more deeply of valuable literature than half those young men who are turned out into the world with a monkish education from Cambridge and Oxford, and are thought learned, while all they know is circumscribed to Latin, Greek, a smattering of Mathematics, and a little Theology.

When the President was again seated, the Secretary produced a large portfolio, from which he drew forth a quantity of printed as well as manuscript papers. These documents were apparently covered (so it struck Crawford), with a multitude of names and the addresses of divers individuals: and on asking the question, Pearson corroborated the conjecture.

"Unfortunately, gentlemen," exclaimed the President, glancing his eyes over one of the above-mentioned papers, "the number of worthless young men, about town, greatly preponderates over that of the good ones."

A mournful silence followed this announcement. "The aggregate of those on the Doubtful List, too," proceeded the President, "is most alarming."

A low moan again bespeaks the feelings of the assembly.

"As for the Good, they are diminishing daily. It has been remarked, gentlemen," continued the speaker, "that one black sheep may ruin a whole flock: the idea is applicable in this case. So numerous are the individuals who live upon their wits, that they cannot fail to corrupt those who were hitherto irreproachable. Look, for instance, at the Honourable Mr. Outandout; he has not got a farthing of ostensible income in the whole world; and yet to-day he has the impertinence to entertain a party of twenty-seven at Quick's Hotel."

"His friend, Mr. Tickall, has agreed to be answerable for the amount of the dinner," exclaimed the master of the above mentioned hotel, who happened to be present, but whose physiognomy had escaped the eye of the President till this moment.

"Gracious heavens!" cried one of the Society, "this Mr. Tickall is not worth a two-penny piece himself. Mr. President, will you have the goodness to put his name to the company?"

"Any thing to oblige Mr. Wilson:"—and the chairman accordingly enquired, "If any person present was acquainted with Mr. Tickall's character?"

"Yes," responded he, who had been addressed as bearing the name of Wilson; "I received a letter this morning from my correspondent at Bath; and I am grieved to find that this said Mr. Tickall is in the habit of going with a stock of ready money, and a well-furnished wardrobe, procured on credit, to hotels, where, by paying his way liberally at first, he generally manages to run on a good account for the future: then, when his bill is sent in, he is found wanting, and his portmanteau emptied of its valuables."

"God damn it!" cried Mr. Quick, his features undergoing a horrible change; "not another drop of wine to-night at my hotel! Dozens of claret already departed—to say nothing of port, sherry, and madeira!"—and off he went like a shot, throwing down his tumbler, and treading upon his neighbour's gouty toe.

Crawford and Pearson were scarcely able to subdue their laughter in the adjacent parlour; nor could many of the company suppress a smile.

"There arrived in town the day before yesterday," said the President, when order was restored, "one Captain Dashwell: he has taken up his abode at a handsome house in Dover-Street, for which I find he has paid half a year's rent in advance, probably as a bribe to those who may make enquiries

of his landlord. This morning he came to my shop with his wife, or mistress, and bought some trifling things, for which he paid; but it appeared that his good lady desired a shawl, valued at sixty guineas—a very handsome pattern. 'Well, my dear,' said the Captain, 'I suppose I must indulge you with it.' Then turning to me, he continued, 'Will you send it presently to No—, Dover-Street? I have not sufficient in my pocket to settle for it on the spot, but in the course of the week I shall look in again for other articles—*this little creature is so extravagant!*'" he added, tapping his wife under the chin with an air of affection. They then departed, leaving me uncertain how to act: for I had assured him the shawl should be sent up in the course of the day. If he proves a good man, it will be easy to forward it in the morning, with a note of apology that it did not come before."

"He is a good man," returned one of the company. "A friend of mine at Portsmouth has written to me about him, as he lived there recently."

"And a correspondent of mine at Bristol," said another, drawing a letter from his pocket-book, "has informed me of exactly the reverse."

"Are you both certain he is the same individual alluded to in each letter, gentlemen?" enquired the Secretary.

"Quite," were the replies; and the descriptions then given tallied to a nicety, thus putting the question beyond a doubt.

"I shall mark him on the Doubtful List," returned the President; and the name of Captain Dashwell was immediately committed to paper.

Other names were then put to the vote: for it appeared that the waiters and dependants of the principal hotels at the West-End of the metropolis, were in the pay of this Society, and were ever ready to supply the Secretary with all necessary and honourable information. But let not our readers imagine that this assembly acted the mere part of base spies over the characters of individuals: whatever was debated at the meetings was confined entirely to the knowledge of the members of the Society.

About two hours had now passed away in the discussion of various matters, when an individual stood up, and thus addressed the President:—

"Sir, there is a gentleman in the metropolis, concerning whom I wish the advice of our Society. He has lived some time in London, and is no doubt a perfect man of the world. But his plan is to pay only half of his bills, and allow the other moiety to run on. Often, when I have sent him my account—perhaps of eighty pounds, for clothes, hats, &c.—he has given me thirty or forty in *advance*, as he says; thus suffering the remainders in a period of six years, or thereabouts, to accumulate to three hundred good pounds sterling. What is to be done in this difficult case?"

"Are there any more complaints against the said individual?" asked the President. "At all events, let his name be called!"

"Pearson!" exclaimed the complainant (who, it appears, was a tailor,) to the astonishment of Crawford; but not at all to that of his friend, who was prepared for the result the moment his tradesman commenced the above narrative of accusations against him.

A few others stood up, and corroborated the evidence of the tailor—adding that it was Mr. Pear-

son's invariable method of proceeding, to obtain long credit, and occasionally diminish the account by paying a third or a moiety, on its being presented to him. The President took some minutes to consider, whispering occasionally with the Secretary; and in a short time it was put to the vote, "Whether Mr. Pearson be arrested or not?"

These were welcome news indeed for him who was so materially concerned, and who was so much nearer than his judge and jury deemed him to be; but he merely looked at Crawford, smiled, and coolly helped himself to a glass of wine and lighted another cigar. It was presently agreed that the matter last put to the vote, should be left for future consideration,—“because” as one observed, “there were many extenuating points in favour of Mr. Pearson: viz. his frequent payment of a certain portion, and his readiness to recommend good customers to the shops of those he dealt with.” A resolution was, however, carried, that no farther credit to any important amount should be given him, till a final decision had taken place. Meantime his name was marked on the Doubtful List.

Crawford and his companion laughed in their sleeves, and cast significant looks at each other, but said nothing for at that moment silence reigned in the other apartment, as the President was glancing his eye over certain documents connected with the affairs of the meeting. To be brief, a great deal of business was transacted on this occasion; and it was long past midnight ere Crawford returned home to Conduit Street.

* * * * *

The morning that dawned on the night whose incidents have just been related, seemed darker, more sombre, and more gloomy to the doomed man—the death-condemned Rivingstone—than any former one which he had ever known.

Never to him had the atmosphere seemed more dense and oppressive. A few struggling and misty beams penetrated into his wretched dungeon. A sickening feeling was at his heart—there was also a painful sinking at his stomach: something like a weight seemed to be placed upon his brain—for he had made up his mind to die within twelve hours!

Though his resolutions were as firm as the foundations of those adamantine rocks of whose fabled existence we read in Eastern lore—though naught could turn him from his purpose—from his determination to anticipate, by means of self-destruction, the awful doom that awaited him—still a profound sense of his fearful situation weighed upon his soul like lead.

Should he make a desperate effort to save his life, by sending for the governor and offering to reveal circumstances of the greatest importance to society? should he endeavour to obtain a commutation of his sentence from death to transportation, by disclosing that which would throw Arnold and Crawford into Newgate within a few hours?

No!—he would not turn against his former companions! Besides—even if a strange principle of honour did not induce him to remain staunch—he had so little to gain by becoming an informer! Transportation for the remainder of his existence was an alternative scarcely less fearful than death itself!

“If Arnold keeps his word and sends me the

poison,” said Rivingstone to himself, at the end of a long cogitation on his position, “I will use it—and he and Crawford will be safe. If he fails me, I will send for the governor and reveal all I know—everything, without reserve;—for, come what may, I will not die upon the scaffold!”

His breakfast was brought in—but he felt no inclination to touch it. He paced the dungeon with agitated steps.

At length—when the sun had reached the meridian—a turnkey entered and delivered a brown paper parcel, saying, “A girl has left this clean linen for you.”

He then withdrew; and the moment he was gone Rivingstone tore open the parcel—for he knew that it came from Arnold. He found at first only an envelope of linen:—he was now alarmed, lest the packet had been opened in the lobby, and the poison kept back. He, however, had no reason to terrify himself on this head: a small phial was concealed in a pair of stockings; and the contents of that phial were beyond all doubt the fatal dose. He now held the means of death in his grasp; and he prepared to die.

He did not pray—he did not breathe a single sigh to that God whom he had been taught to reverence—he lifted not up his voice to Him whose doctrines he had once professionally preached. But he collected together in his mind all the arguments he could think of in favour of suicide in preference to the other alternative which had ere now occupied his thoughts. And still he was oppressed with the weight upon his brain, a severe palpitation of the heart, and a load upon his stomach!

At length, when he had fully made up his mind to anticipate with his own hand the sentence of the law, he exclaimed with a triumphant air, “Now I am mine own master—I am beyond the power of men. Yes,” he continued, as he waved the phial above his head, as if it were a trophy of glory, instead of the engine of death, “this shall end an existence which has been strangely chequered,—at one time preaching the Gospel to an attentive congregation; then suffering myself to be bribed by a worthless individual, for the extraction of a leaf of the register; at length becoming a roving highwayman, with money in my pocket, and a jovial friend to drink with—now cast into a prison, when the most glorious scheme in the world is at the height of its success, and I fancied myself destined to share its profits. But a truce to these reminiscences—these past, fantastic visions—this mixture of felicity and woe! A health to ye,” he added, laughing bitterly, “who believe me to be in your power; a health to ye, base myrmidons of justice; a health, tyrannical laws, despotic government, unjust legislature, dissipated aristocracy—sensual King—a health, and with it the parting curse of a murderer!”

Here a shudder came over him, for he remembered the fatal scene, in which he had borne his part, at the mile-stone, near Hounslow.

“The curses of an assassin, a robber, a priest, and one who deserves not even commiseration!” he repeated, almost frantically: and then he uncorked the phial. He raised it—paused for an instant:—his pulse beat quickly—the palpitation of his heart was violent.

Just then a step was heard in the passage—the bolt of his door was touched outside—some one

was evidently about to enter:—he cared not who it was, but placed the poison to his lips, and swallowed it, as the clergyman stepped into the dungeon to give him spiritual consolation!

CHAPTER XXXII.

All the horrors of her situation now came pouring upon her imagination, the hideous phantoms passing in grim array before her, until she saw death in all its various and most appalling shapes.

Zohrab the Hostage.

the raging seas are wont to rore
When wintry storms his wrathful wreck doth threaten;
The rolling billows beat the rugged shore,
As they the earthen would shoulder from her seats.

SPENSER.

WHEN Emily had made up her mind to so fatal a resolution as that of ending her days by suicide, she felt strangely tranquil,—relieved as it were from the load which oppressed her! But while her delicate hand was preparing to trace upon the paper before her some parting lines to her mother, a sudden idea struck her—that she was also about to become a mother, and that in killing herself, she would at the same moment extinguish the sparks of life in a being who was innocent and guiltless, although begotten in sin. This conviction so affected the poor girl, that the pen was thrown hastily away; and she rose from her chair to contemplate with horror the deed she had ere now meditated. The same impression prompted her to rush forward and cast the bottle of laudanum from the window. She then sat down, and surrendered herself to the most pitiable reflections.

"If I still continue with my aunt," thought she, "she must necessarily discover in a short time my real situation: the six months which Arnold informed me my mother had fixed upon as a trial of our affections, are past; and yet I can scarcely hide from myself the distressing fact of his perfidy—the awful conviction that he wishes to deceive me. Within a fortnight I was to have heard from him—haply he might, he may be sincere, despite of my suspicions. Shall I write to my mother—declare all—implore her forgiveness—and demand her assent according to promise?—Oh! no—for Arnold would never forgive me, if he be constant still; and if he be not, the application would be useless!"

Such were the conflicting ideas that filled the bosom of the unfortunate Emily. What indeed could she do? whither could she turn for advice? And yet something decisive must shortly be effected, or her honour would be for ever gone. This was an awful position for an unprotected girl of her age and condition to be placed in. Still she clung to the faint hope that Arnold would shortly appear; and while her heart teemed with the impression, she penned another epistle to him, wherein, with all the eloquence that excessive sorrow could prompt, she reminded him of the expiration of the six months, and demanded the fulfilment of his promise.

No—we are in error: she only supplicated it,—yes, supplicated for her own rights with as much humility as that with which the impoverished mendicant implores a morsel of bread from the hand of the lordly paladin. Oh! it was then that she experienced how greatly woe can humble the lofty mind—how a deviation from the strict path of morality which society has marked out for the female sex to pursue, can lessen the elevated tone of assurance, and cut short the syl-

ables of pride! A hundred thousand arrows, piercing her bosom at that moment, could not have wounded it more than did the sense of the above terrible conviction flashing across her heated brain, and making her heart—that poor, lacerated, bruised, almost broken heart—palpitate fearfully.

Oh! the bosom on which the head of Arnold had luxuriously reclined, and which his hand had amorously pressed amidst thrilling joys, beat not now voluptuously. Far absent from her imagination, were the blissful delights of love—long alienated from her mind had been the recollections of those pleasures she had tasted in her seducer's arms! She thought but of her sorrows and the means of extricating herself therefrom. Not even the condemned criminal, about to ascend to the platform of the gibbet, could have experienced a deeper degree of misery than Emily. That misery defies the ablest pen to depict it! Those alone can imagine its extent, who have been placed in a similar position. Yes,—soothly—though this tale be written for the amusement of the world, yet may an useful moral be extracted from its pages—yet may the lesson which Emily's history contains, be essentially beneficial to many! The voice of society is ever harshly loud against the unfortunate weak one; and she, who has yielded to the insidious wiles of the base seducer, can expect no mercy—no extenuation—no compassionate sympathy!

But to continue. Arnold received the letter, and saw that he must act decisively. Not regarding the consequences, however fatal they might be, he was aware that it became utterly impossible to divert any longer the afflicted object of his lusts with new falsehoods; neither could he lead her to the bridal altar—that was equally impracticable! He therefore sate coolly down, and returned a conclusive answer, totally reckless of the horrible results it might produce.

With a trembling hand Emily received it from the postman; with a palpitating heart she hurried to her chamber to peruse it; and with feelings as of approaching dissolution she discovered her doom. In this letter Arnold acknowledged the falsehoods he had invented concerning her mother's sanction to the union after a period of six or seven months—he declared his inability to marry her, and wound up his fearful disclosures with the insulting offer, that if she would live with him as his mistress, he would hasten to Southampton, and fetch her away to a private dwelling which he would immediately procure in London.

It was fortunate, as it happened, that he had added this: otherwise grief would have killed the wretched Emily. But now, indignation—the violent ebullition of wounded pride and frenzied wrath—served materially to deaden the burst of sorrow to which her bosom gave way. Never, never could she consent to live with him in the light of a pensioned harlot. She felt her love almost turned to hate,—a woman's thirst for vengeance is terrible,—vengeance she was determined to have; then she remembered that he was the father of the child she bore in her womb—that she would shortly give birth to one who might resemble him whom she once had adored;—her ideas of vengeance gradually diminished, and her tears flowed plentifully.

"Is it for this," she said within herself, "that



surrendered mine innocence to him? is it thus that the traitor can deceive me? has he the assurance to deny the sacred vows he pledged to me in the face of heaven? Oh! on the awful day of the universal judgment, when both shall stand in the presence of the divinity, trembling at his footstool—how will he repent, while the Almighty, reminding him of his crimes, pronounces his eternal doom!"

But she shuddered as she murmured aloud these last words.

At this moment a servant hastily entered the apartment, and without noticing Emily's sorrow, requested Miss Crawford's immediate presence in another chamber, as Mrs. Otway had been taken with a violent fit of apoplexy, and was insensible. This afflicting news crouched the unfortunate girl, and served partially to wean her from the severe contemplation of her own woes, by obliging her to think of the situation in which her aunt

was placed. One instant was sufficient for her to gain the bedside of Mrs. Otway, to whom a surgeon had already been summoned. On the entrance of Emily, the old lady was as white as marble; her hand was cold, and the medical man shook his head dubiously.

"Is there no hope, Sir? for God's sake, speak!" enquired Miss Crawford, gazing earnestly in the surgeon's face, as if to scrutinize his most secret thoughts.

"None!" was the solemn reply. "'Tis already over—that struggle was the last!"

Emily heard no more, but fell almost senselessly on the chilling form of her poor aunt.

This last stroke was the sum of all Emily's evils. She wept bitterly—her soul was too much alive to the gnawing stings of grief, to have allowed even the most partial insensibility; so she felt all the horrors of her situation.

Mrs. Otway had long been in a declining state

Her health had for the last two or three weeks become visibly more precarious; and apoplexy had now concluded her days.

Till a late hour did Emily sit by the side of that bed whereon the corpse lay; and when she did retire to her couch, it was not to taste repose in sleep. What now was to be her fate? Her mother would of course hasten down to Southampton to attend the funeral of her aunt; her disgrace would then inevitably be discovered; for although it had hitherto escaped even the prying eyes of the domestics, still nothing can remain concealed from the strict scrutiny of a parent. What could she do? Should she hurry homewards, cast herself at the feet of her mother, and confess all? Should she accept the insulting proffer made to her by Arnold? or what course should she pursue? Distracted—undecided—finding it impossible to resolve on any fixed plan, such was the disordered state of her mind, most miserably she passed the night. A few lines had she penned to her mother, informing her of the melancholy event that had taken place: in thirty-six hours Mrs. Crawford might be there—reproaching her for her frailty, discarding her from her maternal bosom, rejecting her supplications of forgiveness, and yet turning away from her in agony! Then Catherine—James—how would they be afflicted to hear of her weakness and of Arnold's treachery!

The day that dawned upon that mournful night was marked by frequent showers of rain, and by the inclemency of a cold blast whistling drearily through the spacious house, as if proclaiming by its monotonous sound, its knowledge of the presence of a corpse! That day was followed by another night of awful contemplation, harassing more and more the mind and frame of the unfortunate girl. Languidly, and her eyes red with weeping, she rose at an early hour:—towards the evening her mother was certain to arrive. Now her fears—her alarm became insupportable. The servants noticed her agitation, and vainly offered their rude sympathy. Emily was in terror (for so it is with guilt,) that they were acquainted with her shame; she therefore refused their consolation. But they believed her to be weeping for her aunt, and were too delicate to persist in their efforts to administer solace to her afflicted soul.

The weather was now, if anything, more inauspicious than on the preceding day. Heavily the hours rolled onward; the shrill voice of the bell that proclaimed their consecutive lapse, had given notice of two—three—and four; and Emily was sitting in her own bed-room, a prey to all the horrors that the utmost calamity can produce in the mind of a female. Presently the sounds of wheels came quickly up the street—nearer and nearer; the driver cracked his whip—now nearer still—sadly beat her heart!—and a chaise drew up at the door. She heard the warning of her mother's approach—she saw the lovely Catherine anxiously gazing from the window of the vehicle, to catch a glimpse of her sister: all this Emily could not support—anticipated vituperation—agonised feelings—exposure of her disgrace—terrible!

In a moment of frenzy, as her parent and sister were stepping from the carriage, Emily threw on her bonnet and cloak, put a purse into her pocket, and rushed down stairs towards the garden. This was traversed with the rapidity of

lightning, despite of her situation; the fatal summer-house was passed—she cast one glance upon it, and sighed adieu! Arrived at the extremity of the enclosure, Emily pushed open a small door, which gave admittance into another street. It was dusk; and she hurried wildly on, careless of whither she was going, but congratulating herself on having escaped the scrutiny of her mother.

Headless of what street she was threading, Emily hastened onwards, and presently found herself, by the light of the lamp, in the vicinity of the quay, where a confused noise of sailors' conversation struck upon her ears.

"Who's for Guernsey? Are all the passengers embarked?" cried a loud voice. "The vessel is about to weigh."

A sudden thought struck the timid fugitive. And obeying the impulse of the moment, she stepped into a boat that was waiting. In five minutes she was safely on board a cutter, bound for St. Pierre-Porte in Guernsey. The sails were speedily set: a fresh breeze, somewhat boisterous, was favourable for the passage; and the lights of Southampton were soon lost in the darkness and the distance.

But the sea was far from calm. The foaming crests of rising billows were even visible through the sombre obscurity of night, as the vessel emerged from the Southampton water into the open sea. It was then that the motion of the cutter began to operate violently upon poor Emily. Cooped up in a narrow berth, with five or six other women ill around her, she felt all the horrors of that dreadful sickness, which, when experienced for the first time, seems the precursor of approaching death. Sleep refused to visit her eyes: every moment her illness increased. The fellow-passengers would not suffer the door of the cabin to be opened: thus even during a cold night the heat was therein intolerable. At about nine o'clock the Needles were cleared safely; the gallant ship pushed on, furrowing the green sea-loam with her sharply-pointed prow. Ever and anon the voice of the captain was heard echoing loudly amid the shrill whistling of the wind, the rattling of the cordage, or the occasional flapping of the sails.

Gloomily the hours passed away—the gale increased towards morning, and some of the canvass was taken down. During the night the wind had shifted two or three points, and the cutter was consequently compelled to make frequent tacks, thus materially extending her course towards the island of destination.

At six o'clock, the violent current in Alderney Race agitated the vessel to such a degree, that Emily firmly believed her last hour was come.

A dangerous point now presented itself amidst the obscurity which enveloped the morning; for the rays of the Gasket Lamps were invisible, and the captain was obliged to trust entirely to his experience in the navigation of those parts. Happily the perilous rocks were avoided—the wind abated as the day-light increased; and at about eleven o'clock the vessel anchored in the roads between Guernsey and Sark.

St. Pierre-Porte is built in rather a remarkable manner. The lower town commences on the beach, even at the water's edge, and gradually rises an acclivity, on the summit of which is the New Town. A hundred and ninety-nine steps, leading to the latter from the market-place of the

former, may give an idea of the height of the hill on which the most fashionable part of the capital of Guernsey is situate. The harbour is small and filthy, calculated only for vessels of insignificant burden. But the roadstead is commodious in fair weather; interspersed, however, with a thousand dangerous rocks, which being covered at high water make the navigation perilous and difficult in the wintry season, or to the inexperienced mariner. About four hundred yards from the mouth of the pier, is an ancient fortress, covering a little island, round which the green waves incessantly dash. Castle Cornet is the name of this stronghold, which is celebrated in history.

The cutter had no sooner come to an anchor, when several boats put off to convey the passengers on shore. Of course divers waiters from the various inns arrived with them: and "Payne's," "Marshall's," "Towzer's hotel," echoed over the busy deck. While Emily was paying her fare to the captain, who was a good-natured man, she requested him to recommend her to the most respectable of the aforesaid hotels. He glanced once over her person—a handsome cloak enveloped it—and despite of her haggard appearance, he saw by the superior beauty of her face, her air, her address, and her manners, that she was a lady. Without giving himself, as many others would have done, the trouble to conjecture why she should be alone, and evidently unacquainted with the island whither his vessel had brought her, he answered respectfully, recommending Payne's hotel in preference to the others. Having wished him a good morning, she stepped into the boat, and was soon landed in perfect safety.

Arrived at Payne's Hotel, a comfortable fire and a good breakfast served to refresh the poor fugitive. But it was now that Emily had ample time to ponder upon the step she had taken. During the passage from England to Guernsey, her extreme indisposition had not allowed her leisure for such meditation; but at present, she could not help giving way to a variety of reflections. She had quitted Southampton with so much precipitation,—she had fled from her mother as the hind would avoid the howling dogs that pursue for its destruction: and she now found herself friendless, unprotected, abroad in the wide world, her own mistress—*'that heritage of woe,'* and about to become a mother herself in an island whither she had never been before. All the rashness of her proceeding struck upon her in a moment; and less than ever did she know what course to follow! It was true she had between twenty and thirty pounds in her purse; but that would shortly be expended:—then who was to provide for her, and her expected offspring? Besides these harrowing thoughts was one more afflicting—more desolating still; viz. the feelings of the mother she had eluded—the grief of a sister she had fled from! She had moreover left the corpse of her aunt to proceed to the grave, unattended by herself—herself, whom that aunt had not only so tenderly loved, but whom she had remembered liberally in her will. An agony of tears partially relieved her from the mental pain she experienced, and gave some solace to her lacerated heart.

Now Miss Payne, an elderly and very benevolent woman, having remarked the sorrowful

looks of the poor Emily, determined to endeavour to console her. Filled with this idea, which did honour to her charitable heart, she hastened upstairs to the apartment her guest inhabited. A low knock at the door obtained her admittance; nor was Emily sorry to see a female—for in woes like her's, a face, that seemed able to evince sympathy, is an essential comfort. Miss Payne seated herself, by the request of Miss Crawford: and observed, "You had a rough passage, madam; had you not?"

"Dreadful—I was very ill all night," returned Emily.

"Poor dear girl: perhaps you were in a hurry to leave Southampton?"

"Oh! yes—indeed I was," Miss Crawford began; but checking herself, she looked down and blushed.

"Do not think me impertinent, madam," said Miss Payne kindly, "but I saw you were ill—and if there be any thing—"

"Thank you, thank you—I am not only ill, but very miserable," cried Emily, pressing the good hostess's hand warmly.

Miss Payne wiped away a tear.

"Poor child!" she exclaimed again. "I will not question you—that may add to your sorrows: remain quiet a little; or will you lie down to refresh yourself for a few hours?"

"No—I prefer setting where I am—my mind is restless. In the course of the day I shall be better: meantime, let me have pens, ink, and paper."

"Yes, madam;" and Miss Payne withdrew.

Now even if this worthy woman had not caught a glimpse of the well-lined purse upon the table, we must in justice inform our readers that her conduct would have been precisely the same—equally kind, equally attentive, equally benevolent. As she hastened down-stairs to send up the materials Miss Crawford had requested, she felt satisfied in her own mind, that Emily had come over to find some faithless husband, who had deserted her; not that she suspected the real situation of that wretched girl, with regard to her pregnancy; for we have before noticed that it was at present only visible to the experienced eye of a mother herself: in a few weeks, however, it could be no longer concealed.

When Emily was provided with writing implements, she knew not wherefore she had demanded them. To whom could she write? certainly not to Arnold; he had ruined and insulted her! Certainly not to Hunter—how could she tell him her shame, her disgrace? Certainly not to her mother—that parent she fancied at the moment, would never forgive her!

But, oh! she did not sufficiently appreciate the affection of Mrs. Crawford for her child! To whom, then, was she to address herself? to no one—not a friend in the world!

Distracting idea! with a sorrowful air she threw the paper aside, deliverin'; herself once more up to her melancholy reflections.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

To support the sorrows of life, one has need of all his philosophy.

AMABLE BOULANGER.

In the meantime Mrs. Crawford and her younger daughter had stepped out of the post-chaise, that bore them from Bagshot to Southampton. The

hearts of both were filled with conflicting feelings;—sorrow for the decease of a relation, and joy in contemplating the approaching meeting with Emily. Hastily they crossed the hall of the house and followed the footman to the drawing-room.

"I caught a glimpse of my sister at a window above," remarked Catherine, when they found that Emily was not in the apartment to which they were at present shown.

"I will send the lady's-maid to summon her immediately," returned the footman; and he departed to execute his commission.

"Perhaps Emily was not dressed, mamma?" said Catherine, impatiently waiting to see her sister.

"She would not be thinking of these vanities when death is in the house," replied Mrs. Crawford.

"I forgot. However—here she comes!" and the amiable girl rushed forward to meet the individual who was descending the stairs, and whom she fondly hoped to be her sister.

The door opened, and the lady's-maid entered, with sorrow depicted upon her countenance.

"I cannot find Miss Crawford any where, Madam," said she, addressing the mother; "and yet I know she was in her chamber some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour ago."

"Yes, if it be the one immediately above this," cried Catherine, trembling, she could scarcely tell wherefore.

"It is the same chamber you mention, Miss," answered the servant.

Half an hour passed away; and Emily appeared not. Conjectures as to the reason of this delay were vain on all sides: none could account for her absence. At length it struck the lady's-maid that she might be out, although it was not her habit to walk in the dusk. An examination in her apartment confirmed the suspicions of the servant; for the bonnet and cloak were gone. This appeared singular in the extreme, particularly as Catherine had caught sight of her sister at the window the moment the carriage stopped. Uneasiness gave way in an hour to alarm and excessive terror; the dependants of the family were closely questioned—they were as ignorant as their interrogators concerning the motives of this absence. The evening was dark—could any danger have happened to the poor girl? thought Mrs. Crawford; and Catherine's tears fell plentifully.

But we are not about to dwell upon the grief of the afflicted mother and daughter, when the midnight came and Emily had not yet returned. A sleepless pillow was pressed by both: an anxious morning slowly dawned; conjecture, hope, alarm, dread, and doubt filled their minds with conflicting woes.

Despite of their sorrow, Mrs. Crawford immediately commenced giving proper directions for the completion of the funeral preparations, which had already been commenced under the auspices of the surgeon who had attended Mrs. Otway in her last moments. While her mother was engaged in these important matters, Catherine passed a miserable day, without any fixed employment. Another sleepless night did not refresh either: the morning that succeeded it was the one intended for the funeral obsequies. The body was committed to the ground, and the parting prayers were read over the grave.

When the will of the late Mrs. Otway was read, it appeared that she had remembered Emily even much more liberally than had been anticipated. The conditions of the bequest were singular, and calculated to excite surprise in the minds of Mrs. Crawford and Catherine. The paragraphs ran as follow: "And having thus disposed of the aforesaid property to my relations in London, I desire that the sum of five thousand pounds now standing in my name, &c. be transferred to that of Emily Crawford, eldest daughter, &c. on condition that she espouse one Henry Hunter, surgeon, &c. of Southampton; for that worthy young man has frequently suffered expressions to escape him, which have led me to believe he entertains an affection for the said Emily Crawford. If, on the contrary, he should start objections, or if his or her heart be otherwise so interested that an union between them is impossible, then I hereby devise and bequest the moiety of the said sum of five thousand pounds to the said Henry Hunter; and the other moiety to Emily Crawford, as marks of my affection and regard for each."

This singular passage in Mrs. Otway's will revived all Mrs. and Miss Crawford's grief for the extraordinary disappearance of Emily. They both knew by name the Mr. Hunter alluded to, for Emily had frequently mentioned him in her letters to her mother or sister. As the surgeon who attended the death-bed of the deceased lady was acquainted with Hunter's address in London, a letter was instantly dispatched, informing him of the death of Mrs. Otway and this remembrance of his name in her will.

A few days had now passed since the funeral, when Mrs. Crawford, heart-broken, a prey to doubt and anxiety, was about to return home: but the following note, which was put into her hand by one of the servants, detained her at Southampton a short time longer. She recognised the hand-writing of Emily, and hastily tore open the paper. All it contained were these few words:—

"A disobedient daughter has fled from her mother's reproaches, and will devote the rest of her miserable days to repentance and prayer, without daring to seek the threshold of the family she has disgraced. "EMILY."

It were impossible to conceive the alarm and grief of Mrs. Crawford and Catherine. If all fears for Emily's life had been cleared away by the receipt of the above epistle—if her death were no longer dreaded—still the nature of the crime or fault she had committed remained impervious to conjecture, as well as did the place of her present abode. On enquiries being made of the servants concerning the bearer of the letter, the reply was equally unsatisfactory. An individual dressed as a sailor, had brought it to the door, and, without saying a word, had immediately departed. To search for one who was only seen by the footman for an instant would be ridiculous. An advertisement was, however, put into the local newspaper, stating, that if the bearer of the said letter would apply to Mrs. Crawford he should be amply rewarded: but this step experienced no better success than former ones.

In the midst of these eventful circumstances Mr. Hunter arrived from London, and presented himself to the distressed females now occupying the house of the deceased Mrs. Otway. His grief at the tidings of Emily's disappearance knew no bounds. Without entertaining the slightest sus-

picion of that unfortunate girl's real situation, an idea flashed across his mind, that, disappointed by Arnold, she had committed suicide, and had writted the above note to conceal for ever the truth from her mother. With this impression, he sought Mrs. Crawford in the drawing room, where Catherine was also seated; and after some general remarks, he began to touch gently upon the tender subject.

"The influence of disappointed love, madam," said he, purposely bringing the conversation round to a certain point, "is so great, that individuals have not unfrequently died from actual grief: who knows but that Miss Crawford is now pining away—"

"Emily! Mr. Hunter? Oh! no—impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. Crawford; "when she left me seven months ago, I think—her pure heart was as free as—"

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Hunter, to whom Emily had mentioned the procrastination of the six months mentioned by Arnold. "What do I hear?—Madam, I conjure you—are you actually unacquainted then with a certain agreement—with any agreement—any engagement between a gentleman and your daughter Emily?"

"Perfectly unacquainted, Mr. Hunter. Speak—hasten—pity a mother's feelings;" and Mrs. Crawford prepared herself to hear something terrible.

"You of course know an individual named Arnold," proceeded the young surgeon, drawing his chair closer to that of her whom he addressed.

"Yes—yes—he is my best friend!" exclaimed the mother.

"And your daughter's lover!" said Hunter impressively.

"How—unfold all this mystery; you know more than you will acknowledge."

"Her lover—that is to say, the object of her affections," returned Hunter.

"'Tis true!" exclaimed Mrs. Crawford, now calling to mind many little circumstances, looks, sighs, and expressions, which, on the part of Emily, she had failed to consider in their proper light before.

At present all rushed like a whirlwind upon her; and panting for breath, she waited for the surgeon to proceed.

"During Mr. Arnold's visit to Southampton—" began the surgeon.

"Arnold's visits to Southampton! has he been here?" enquired Mrs. Crawford, in profound astonishment.

"Yes, Madam," replied Hunter, after a moment's hesitation whether he should confess all he knew; for he saw distinctly that Mrs. Crawford had been grossly deceived in some material point. But justice prompted him to act the part of a man of honour, and lay open to the mind of a distressed mother those delicate circumstances, which might probably afford a clue to the reason of Emily's desertion—or, horrible to him the thought! of her suicide.

"Yes, Madam; two or three times has he been here. Did Miss Crawford never inform you of an occurrence so important to her welfare?"

"Never—never," was the answer, a cold chill coming over the frame of the distracted woman; for now an idea struck her, like the touch of the arrow of Death, that her daughter was disgraced—that her ruin had been effected!

"Leave the room for a short time, my dear Catharine," said she to her afflicted child, who barely comprehended all that had met her ears.

When Mrs. Crawford and Hunter were alone, she collected the remains of her scattered courage, and prepared to listen to all that might be in store for her.

"I have seen Mr. Arnold in London," continued the surgeon; "I have expostulated with him on his behaviour—on the encouragement he always gave poor Emily. I reminded him of the love a beautiful and affectionate girl bore for him; but he treated my appeals with a semblance of contempt or coolness. And, by the bye—Emily could not have deceived me—Oh! no—" he exclaimed, again calling to mind a circumstance to which he had ere now alluded: "this Mr. Arnold, Madam, declared that you yourself had consented to the union, should a period of six months fail to work a change in the affections of either."

"Then Arnold is indeed a villain!" almost shrieked Mrs. Crawford; "but can it be? has he really completed the ruin of my innocent girl—the child I reared in virtue's paths—the child I sent to the kind care of an aunt—a child pure and spotless under my roof—brought up to seek the road of honour and rectitude! Gracious Almighty—Omnipotent Deity! where are thy lightnings? wherefore do thy thunders sleep, if that Arnold be the miscreant he appears?"

"He is beyond a doubt!" solemnly returned Hunter, while he concealed, as well as he was able, the unutterable anguish of his soul.

At that moment Catherine entered the room, bearing some papers in her hand.

"Mamma," said she, "I was by accident looking over the trunks in poor Emily's room above, and I found these writings:—did I do right to bring them?"—and having laid them on the table, she once more withdrew, suspecting, from the conversation that had taken place between her mother and Hunter before she was desired to quit the room, that Arnold had deceived her family in some way or another—but how she could not divine.

Hastily did Mrs. Crawford snatch up the letters, for such they were: and anxiously did her eye glance over the first. It was the one, which is given in the eleventh chapter of this tale, and which contained the following paragraph: "*Should on the other hand, any disagreeable result ensue from the thrilling moments of happiness we enjoyed together in the delicious summer-house, when I and my lovely Emily tasted the bliss of a sincere passion in each others arms, then must we be immediately married, with or without your mother's consent!*"

This was enough; this was a confirmation of all Mrs. Crawford's terrible suspicions; and she fainted. Hunter flew to her assistance, and with difficulty recovered her; but he was cautious enough not to alarm Catherine nor the servants. When Mrs. Crawford awoke once more, she became a prey to the deepest affliction—an affliction produced by a daughter's dishonour effected by a hypocritical villain—a deceiver so long cherished in her family! And, moreover, under the auspices of that villain had her son passed a considerable portion of the last three years of his life,—and at an age too, when the generality of minds will turn either to the right, or to the wrong, as superior examples may direct, and as the tutor may feel inclined to bend the twig!

Still amidst these wretched reflections the mother had somewhat left to solace her. Catherine was all she wished, and was soon to be united to an honourable young man, every way calculated to make her happy. Again, her son James, she flattered herself, had prospects as splendid as could be desired. These thoughts certainly calmed her a little; and when she and Hunter again referred to the circumstances that had so lately transpired, it was agreed that Catherine should not be made acquainted with the actual disgrace of her sister, to account for whose disappearance Mrs. Crawford undertook to afford some excuse—a task by no means difficult, considering the artlessness of the young maiden's mind.

How to proceed, with regard to Arnold, was to become a matter of later consideration; but on this head Hunter had already made up his mind; and as he was afraid James Crawford might anticipate his intentions, he easily persuaded the mother to leave him also in the dark for the present. Mrs. Crawford looked upon the young surgeon as a friend, and readily acceded to his request, or advice.

And now let us endeavour to describe the feelings of Henry Hunter. His lacerated heart enclosed so much sorrow, that it were almost impossible to conceive a being more truly wretched. With partial delight he had heard read the portion of Mrs. Otway's will relating to himself and Emily: then he remembered that their union was impossible, as the heart of that unfortunate girl beat not for him. Scarcely had he thus convinced himself of the futility of Mrs. Otway's intention on that head, when the evidences of Miss Crawford's disgrace became known to him in the manner ere now related, through the medium of Arnold's fatal letters. Oh! what was his surprise!—how great was his grief, when he discovered that she, whom he had deemed all purity and the afflicted innocence—that she, whom he had considered his injured friend, and the victim of an enamoured, if possible, of the amiable and beautiful Catherine. But he was not now made acquainted with any of the particulars concerning Emily, farther than James had been; as Mrs. Crawford was determined to follow the advice of a Hunter, and not reveal her daughter's disgrace to a soul.

Returned once more to the peaceful cottage, Mrs. Crawford wrote a letter to James informing him of his sister's disappearance, but without stating her discovery of the cause. With difficulty could she restrain her hand from tracing on the page those words that might warn him against Arnold: but remembering Hunter's request, she concluded without mentioning the name of the hypocrite. James was not materially afflicted at what he read; his heart was so elated by the success his schemes had experienced, and

his disposition was now rendered so callous to all tender feelings by dissipation and luxurious enjoyments, that he cared but little what might become of his family, as long as he was happy. Once the very name of his mother was enough to arouse him, and cause him to reflect, amid the scenes of vice, on the villany of his pursuits, and the atrocious deeds he had committed, or was daily committing. But all that compunction had vanished; there was no thrilling magic, no enchanting influence in the tender name of *Mother* any more; his eye glanced coldly over the letter—a frigid "Poor girl, what a pity!" expressed his apathy; and he put on his hat to seek his friend Pearson, in order to discuss some project of pleasure for the day!

Mrs. Crawford had not even solicited the attendance of James at the funeral of his aunt; for the will of Mrs. Otway not only contained a desire that this last piece of human vanity should be as quiet and tranquil as possible, but James's mother also wished her son to continue in London, under the auspices of his patron; as she fancied that Mr. Fitzgerald had doubtless appointed certain individuals to take notice of his conduct, and report accordingly, on the old gentleman's return from Lisbon, whither in the belief of the world he had undertaken a voyage. Now, however, she dreaded the companionship of Arnold for her son; she trembled lest he should fall into the meshes the deceiver might weave around him;—then she made up her mind to trust to Hunter, and allow him to arrange the matter as he chose, since he had promised to put an immediate end to the friendship between Arnold and James. With this assurance Mrs. Crawford was satisfied.

Captain Stewart, ever since the arrangement devised by his father concerning the matrimonial project, had constantly paid his respects to the two ladies at the cottage, and daily became more enamoured, if possible, of the amiable and beautiful Catherine. But he was not now made acquainted with any of the particulars concerning Emily, farther than James had been; as Mrs. Crawford was determined to follow the advice of a Hunter, and not reveal her daughter's disgrace to a soul.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

And since thy heart I cannot share,
Believe me what I am—thy friend.
And who so cold as look on thee,
Thou lovely wand'rer—and be less?
Nor be, what man should ever be,
The friend of beauty in distress!

BYRON.

Think not so;
In the full flood of joy at your return,
They'll drown their anger: and absolving tears
Shall warmly welcome the poor wanderer home!
The Hopsman.

THE vessel, which bore Emily from English land to the coasts of Sardinia's island, returned a second time to Southampton, having performed another voyage in due course. It happened that the master of the cutter was taken ill a quarter of an hour after his landing; and a surgeon—the nearest to his dwelling that could be procured,—was immediately sent for. The one called in accidentally turned out to be our friend Henry Hunter, who had remained behind the Crawford's at Southampton, to arrange his worldly affairs.

satisfactorily; so that in case any thing fatal should occur to him in the deadly encounter which he had made up his mind to have with the seducer—Arnold, his few relations, to whom his property would fall, might experience no embarrassment in obtaining it.

Promptly attending to the summons of the captain's boy, Hunter followed the lad to the house in which the patient lay. On his arrival, he found the invalid in bed, and not so bad as he had fancied himself to be; still he was indisposed; but the most hardy and enduring men are frequently the greatest cowards and hypochondriacs in illness.

Having prescribed the necessary remedies for the ailments of the captain, and having administered comfort to his timid mind by an assurance that his case was far from so desperately bad as he had deemed, Hunter carelessly enquired what kind of a passage he had had the previous night; as it was about nine in the morning when he had been called in to attend him.

"Much better than the one to Guernsey before, Sir," was the reply: "and we had no ladies with us, thank God! It always happens that whenever the weather is bad, we are sure to be troubled with a quantity of that living lumber, the female sex; and when it is fine, there are scarcely ever any on board. Yet nobody can say but that my craft is as nice and tight a little vessel as ever you would wish to see, Sir."

"I do not doubt it," returned Hunter, about to stop the volubility of the invalid; but the conversation took a turn in another minute, which induced the young surgeon to allow the captain to talk as much as he pleased.

"I'm sure the last voyage but one I made to Guernsey," continued the captain,—"it was a terrible night—the sea ran mountains high, and the wind whistled, God knows how: I declare that there was the prettiest young girl on board I ever set eyes on—or may I never get up from this bed! Something preyed desperately upon her mind—poor creature; and on my return I delivered a small note for her at a large house in the street—not a hundred miles off, I guess. She offered me a sovereign for my trouble, desiring me on no account to wait for an answer; but I would not take her money."

"Good God!" exclaimed Hunter, a light breaking in upon him at this disclosure. "Answer, I conjure you; was it at the house of the deceased Mrs. Otway, that you delivered the little note of which you are speaking?"

"It was, Sir,—but I hope there is no harm; for I see none in telling you, particularly as you seem to be acquainted with the circumstance as well as, or perhaps better than I am. And now while I think—it never struck me before—I did hear some talk concerning a young girl that was missing; but we sea-faring men, you know—"

"And was this note directed to Mrs. Crawford?" enquired Hunter eagerly.

The response to his question was in the affirmative.

"Tell me, then, all about it—all you know—all you are acquainted with, I repeat," ejaculated the surgeon hastily. "Where is she? is she well? what did she say? Tell me every thing!"

"Why, Sir," returned the Captain, astonished at the vehemence of Hunter's manner; "there is devilish little to tell, Only that she crossed

over with me a fortnight ago, I should think; and I recommended her to Payne's hotel. I remember, as well as if it were now, the sweet girl asked me in a sweet voice—it was standing on the deck, just as you may be there—"

"Yes, yes—what did she ask you?"

"To which hotel I thought she had better go," was the answer.

"Had she money?" enquired Hunter, eagerly, forgetting that he had been told how Emily tendered the captain a sovereign.

"Had she, indeed, Sir? yes, plenty. I saw it when she took out her purse with her delicate white hand to pay me the passage-money, just as you might do now."

"What then? about the note?"

"Well, Sir," continued the Captain, in terms much too measured to suit the impatience of his medical attendant; "the following day she came down to the quay,—for I had got my craft into the basin the morning we arrived—and she enquired where the vessel was lying. She found it out,—I was on deck, and she addressed herself to me. I felt interested for the dear girl—she had such a lovely set of teeth—such beautiful blue eyes, and such rosy lips, although she was as pale as death."

"Never mind the description," said Hunter impatiently.

"And there were tears in those blue eyes," continued the captain, growing poetical after his manner—"and those cheeks were haggard, and those lips quivered. Now, Mr. Hunter, I have seen three men washed off the deck of my cutter at the same time, during a dreadful storm; I heard their dying cries, and I remembered at the moment that two of them had left wives and orphans destitute, perhaps to want bread: yes, Sir, I saw those three snatched away by the dark green wave to perish and be devoured by fishes—and then Mr. Hunter, I was not affected, no more than you might be if—but no matter; for when I remarked this poor girl, I do really believe a drop came into my eyes—in fact, I'm certain sure, Sir."

Here the compassionate captain paused for a minute, and Hunter placed his handkerchief to his face, sobbing audibly. The invalid was silent no longer than that single minute; he pursued his little narrative slowly, and in a solemn voice, as he lay stretched upon his sick bed.

"I asked her, Sir, what I could do to serve her. She handed me a small note, and desired me, while tears fell down her delicate cheek, to deliver it at Mrs. Otway's house, and to retire immediately, so that no one could question me. She put a sovereign into my hand. I looked at it once—for I'm not a rich man, Sir,—then I looked at her. 'Is it not enough?' said she, as innocently as a lamb might be, while a gentle blush was on her cheek—'I will give you another; or two, if you like—stay;' and she drew forth her purse which was filled with gold—perhaps twenty pounds. I could not help gazing on her countenance more and more, Sir; so without knowing it scarcely, I waited till she offered me a second sovereign. Then I gently took her purse, just as you might do that hat there, Sir, and I placed both pieces of gold in it again, begging God to bless her. Yes, Sir, I seldom pray,—I have no time—but I really did pray then and there for God Almighty to bless her. Was in vain she pressed the

money upon me. 'Like enough,' thought I, 'she may want it herself;'—so I was firm; and having promised to execute her commission, we parted."

"Yes—yes; but you have been to Guernsey again since that—have you not?" demanded Hunter.

"I have, Sir—to be sure; I come now from the voyage to be laid up here in a bed of sickness," was the answer.

"And did you not see her again?" asked Hunter.

"No, I did not, Sir. I enquired at Payne's hotel, and was told that the young lady had gone to reside with a very respectable and worthy gentlewoman, who became mightily attached to her after a few hours' conversation. Miss Payne spoke very high of this charitable individual. I should have gone to see if I could have done anything to serve the poor dear girl, but the house is at least three miles from St. Pierre-Port; therefore my time would not allow me. That is all I know, Sir."

"When do you sail again?" asked Hunter abruptly, forgetful of the kind captain's illness and inability to command his cutter for the present.

"The vessel, Sir, must go the day after tomorrow, whether I am able to attend her, or not."

"Perdition! not before!"

An oath was a rare thing with Hunter: he now stood in a meditating mood for some minutes. At length he made up his mind to wait as patiently as he could till the hour when the ship sailed once more; he would then hasten to Guernsey, seek out Emily, restore her to her forgiving mother, and afterwards pursue her seducer till he had avenged her wrongs.

Let us suppose the intermediate time, from the moment of the above conversation to that when the cutter weighed anchor, to have passed. Let us suppose Hunter seated upon the deck, watching the green billows, as they rolled along, and as the light craft dashed away the spray from her bows.

And here, we may add, as we shall not have again occasion to speak of the good-natured captain, whose place was now temporarily supplied by his mate, that he speedily recovered under the auspices of another surgeon, and lived many years to command a gallant vessel between Southampton and Guernsey.

After a favourable passage, we find Hunter arrived at St. Pierre-Porte, and making anxious enquiries at Payne's Hotel concerning Emily. To all his questions he received generally satisfactory answers: the following is the abstract of the information he obtained.

It appeared that Emily was very wretched, and confessed to Miss Payne her real situation; for she found that the sympathy of another female would console her. But she had not admitted that she bore an illegitimate child in her womb. She had led the hostess to believe that she had been deserted by a worthless husband, and had sought a peaceful asylum in Guernsey. Miss Payne then told the unfortunate Emily, that there was a kind lady, residing about three miles in the country, noted for her charitable and benevolent actions. This lady, whose name was Pembroke, had been herself much tossed upon the wild waves of adversity; thus, aware of misery's acutest sufferings, she now ex-

perienced the best portion of her competent fortune in the amelioration of the condition of those around her, who were wretched, and who merited assistance.

Unknown to Emily, whose pride would not suffer her to address herself to this said Mrs. Pembroke, Miss Payne, in the goodness of her heart, wrote a note to the charitable lady; and was answered personally by her immediate presence at the hotel. She was shown to Emily's room; and a long conversation ensued in private. The issue of this interview was, that Mrs. Pembroke took Emily away in her carriage, and had detained her at her house in the country ever since, treating the afflicted one as her own child, and with all possible indulgence.

But before Mrs. Pembroke left the hotel, it may be as well to observe that she made a handsome present to Miss Payne for her kindness to Emily, and whispered in the good hostess's ear these words—"I have long known by name the family of this young lady, and am glad to be blessed with an opportunity of rendering any of its members a service."

Such were the news that dissipated a portion of Hunter's fears for Emily, on his arrival in Guernsey. Notwithstanding his impatience to have an interview with the unfortunate victim of Arnold's infidelity and lust,—notwithstanding his desire to have an opportunity of assuring her of her mother's forgiveness, which he would pledge himself to obtain,—and notwithstanding his haste to give her consolation, his good sense told him that in her situation too sudden a surprise might be attended with injurious consequences:—he therefore sate down, and in terms of brotherly affection—without a syllable of reproach, but with many of sympathy and friendship—he apprised her of his arrival, of the singular manner in which he had discovered her abode—and of his intention to visit her on the following day; thus allowing her time to collect her courage and mental energies to support the meeting—a meeting that Hunter knew would awake all her bitterest and tenderest feelings!

The letter was duly conveyed to the dwelling of Mrs. Pembroke in the country, whither we shall now conduct our readers.

The house was neatly situated in about the centre of the island, three miles from St. Pierre-Port, and was surrounded by a pleasant grove in summer: but of course, at the season of which we write, the trees were sombre and leafless.

Emily was seated in her bed-chamber, pondering on her very woful condition.

In Mrs. Pembroke she had found not only a sincere friend, but also a confidant. To her she had told all her melancholy story, and had excited, by some means or another, the liveliest interest in that lady's bosom. Without ever alluding to the frailty of her *protégée*, Mrs. Pembroke had consoled, and had comforted her: for she herself was acquainted with adversity! She had married unhappily—had been treated with the most cruel severity by an unfeeling husband in England, because she presented him with no heir:—he had squandered the greater portion of the fortune she had brought him, and at length actually struck her. A separation was mutually agreed upon—a considerable sum of money, enough to produce a more than easy income, was made over to her out of the wrecks of her husband's coffers; and on this



having assumed another name, she had lived respected and tranquilly in the island of Guernsey ever since the above mentioned separation.

All around loved her; she mingled, notwithstanding, very little in society; and when she did, her manners were those of an accomplished and elegant lady, evidently well acquainted with all the *etiquette* to be observed in the most fashionable circles. In person she was that which is called a fine woman; her age was only thirty-five or thirty-six; but care had stamped many premature wrinkles on her brow.

Such was the individual with whom Emily had found an asylum, and in whom a mother.

During the short time she had been there, every attention was shown her; Mrs. Pembroke even stooped to a falsehood, rather than allow her domestics to imagine that Emily bore, unmarried, a child in her bosom. The poor girl was considered an unfortunate wife deserted

by her husband; and thus she commanded respect.

And now came somewhat to disturb the tranquillity in which she had passed her time at the house of Mrs. Pembroke. We mean the letter of Hunter. She dreaded to meet him:—he, who had considered her chaste and pure,—who had called her his friend, his sister,—would he not spurn her from him?

Such at first were her ideas: but a second reference to the note convinced her that on this head she had nothing to fear. Still she dreaded some fearful news concerning her mother. Accustomed, even in the short time she had been at the dwelling of the charitable Mrs. Pembroke, to reveal to that lady all her most secret thoughts, she now hurried to show her the letter, and request her maternal advice; for as a daughter was she considered by her whose counsels she at present sought and required.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Pembroke, embracing Emily with affectionate warmth, "you must see this young man. His letter expresses sentiments of friendship that will not allow him to upbraid or reproach you. Compose yourself—I will be present at first to give you courage: and remember, dear girl, that whatever may happen, you have always an asylum here at your command. You shall be mine own adopted daughter!"

Emily answered only with tears—her heart was too full to allow her to speak.

Mrs. Pembroke proceeded:—

"Perhaps he may succeed in obtaining your mother's pardon. It is evident by his letter that nothing very alarming has occurred with your parent or sister."

This assurance imparted comfort to the afflicted girl.

"From what we may judge in his letter," continued Mrs. Pembroke, "this Mr. Hunter appears a young man of acute feelings, and of a noble mind: he says everything to console you, dear Emily, and nothing to afflict your already too much lacerated heart. Such is not always the way of the world. I have been frequently reproached by my husband for the most trivial faults—aye, and even beaten! But I will not upbraid him behind his back; may he be happy! may he be prosperous! and may he one day recollect her whom he has so severely treated!"

Here Mrs. Pembroke's tears flowed copiously, and were mingled with those of Emily.

Both sate silent for some minutes, and then renewed their conversation: but we shall not intrude more of it upon the patience of the gentle reader, whose complaisance, we may flatter ourselves, is not too frequently taxed with useless digressions nor elaborate discussions.

At twelve o'clock a chaise stopped before the house, and Hunter was shown into the drawing-room, where Emily and Mrs. Pembroke awaited his arrival.

The moment he entered the apartment, he stood still an instant, overpowered by noticing the alteration in Emily's countenance: she sate motionless upon the sofa: then, as it were mechanically, they precipitated themselves into each others arms. Start not, reader—'twas the chaste embrace of friendship, and was long, and was affecting. Mrs. Pembroke shed tears in unison with the youthful pair before her—and those tears were poured profusely. Presently all were restored to calmness; but no one spoke for some minutes.

The silence was broken by Hunter.

"Emily," said he, "you did not think I could come hither to say a single word of reproach: I came to assure you of a tender mother's forgiveness, and I the instrument:—yes—to convince you of my influence to procure it—of my determination——" He stopped—for he was about to say "of avenging all the wrongs you have received at the hands of Arnold."

"You, who were always my friend, Henry," cried the poor girl, in a voice nearly suffocated with internal woe, and with weeping—"you see the shame to which I am reduced!"

"Emily, I do not say you are to blame so much—I do not say you have committed so great a crime!" exclaimed the enthusiastic young man, clasping his hands together, and pressing them upon

his bosom. "You were triumphed over by a villain's wiles—you were grossly deceived by a deliberately-acting miscreant—a wretch unworthy to exist and to pollute the pure air of heaven with his blasting breath: in mine eyes you are not so guilty as a severe world would unextenuatingly deem you."

"Generous youth, you think as I do," cried Mrs. Pembroke fervently.

"No—Emily—you are not so guilty, I must repeat it: and let me now tell you a secret I have hitherto kept in my own breast. When, eighteen months ago, you were first staying with your aunt, I loved you; you went away—I had divined by certain expressions of your's that your heart was another's; look to what I am reduced! Yes—I—'tis I that loved you—that would have made you my wife—that would have cherished—that would have doted on you! This malady, that burns my brain, and preys upon my vitals—this internal flame, never quenched—never to be quenched—arose from love for you—from disappointment—from despair!"

And Hunter struck his forehead forcibly with his open hand.

"O God!—and you love me! what have I not lost?" was all Emily uttered: she fell senseless on the sofa, and was with difficulty recovered, while Mrs. Pembroke and Hunter were nearly distracted.

"It is true," continued Hunter, when Emily was again in a state to attend to his words—"it is true that I have been a victim to my love for you: it is true that my health—my happiness—my repose are gone—that my life is abridged—that all for me is dark and gloomy—that an incessant gnawing at my most vital parts perpetually warns me of my quickly approximating end,—that, whether on my feverish couch, or abroad in the open streets, a certain indescribable restlessness—a weariness—an oppression which day and night is equally wretched—all this—all this—aye, more than you can fancy, or I express—all—all have I suffered—all undergone! But I can perhaps bear more, if more of misery be in store for me;—and yet my cup is brimming already—it is nigh to run over! However, let me not distress you with my griefs—or with my loves; let me talk on your affairs—for they require judgment to direct them!"

Another pause ensued—terrible were the thoughts of all present. Emily at last ventured to ask concerning her mother; hitherto fear had prevented her. Great was her relief, when Hunter gave such replies as made her understand that pardon was to be obtained; and that Mrs. Crawford would forget all, in receiving her daughter to her bosom.

Mrs. Pembroke, in the course of the long conversation that took place on this memorable morning, informed Hunter of her determination to act a mother's part to Emily, so long as the oppressed girl should require a mother's care.

After expressions of gratitude and thanks on the part of Miss Crawford, it was agreed (now that Hunter was convinced of her safety, and as the time approached for her to become a parent) that Emily should stay with Mrs. Pembroke, at all events for the present, and that Hunter should, on his road to London, whither he declared his intention to proceed forthwith, prepare the way for her mother's forgiveness of her frailty: and

on this head, the excellent young man not only pledged himself to succeed, but also to make Mrs. Crawford herself write to her penitent daughter.

CHAPTER XXXV.

And while a sleep profound his eye-lids sealed,
He spoke, and all his villainy revealed.

Anonymous.

CRAWFORD was sitting one morning in a melancholy mood, in the handsomely fitted up library of his abode,—pondering upon the implacable hatred with which Sophia Maxwell continued to pursue him,—when his gloomy reverie was interrupted by the entrance of no less a person than the Honourable Mr. Stewart, the elder brother of Catherine's lover, and heir-apparent to Lord Fanmore, as the reader may remember.

Great was the astonishment of Crawford at receiving this visit. He called to his recollection the overbearing and haughty behaviour of the ill-favoured scion of a noble house, on a former occasion; he therefore prepared to give him no very flattering welcome. Besides, the painful nature of his reverie had not encouraged in James's breast the best humour in the world; a combination of events and reflections had soured his temper, and contracted his countenance into frowns.

Mr. Stewart was, however, by no means abashed, but addressed the youth with an excess of politeness, amounting to familiarity, and quite different from his former conduct.

"I have called, my dear Sir, upon a most important matter," commenced Mr. Stewart, after the usual compliments had been exchanged: but the matter, as it eventually appeared, if it had no sinister design, was not in itself so important as the visitor apparently considered it to be.

James appeared to listen very attentively, marvelling what the said *important matter* could possibly be.

"My brother is, as it were, engaged to your sister: is it not so, my dear Sir?"

"I am led to believe the fact," was the reply.

"And, perhaps, you may consider my request excessively strange—that is, rather extraordinary; but, the truth is—I have a great desire to see my future sister-in-law!"

"Not at all strange, Mr. Stewart. I should fancy your brother would willingly introduce you to my mother, and her daughter: if it be for my consent that you wait, it is freely given," returned Crawford.

"It is not for your consent exactly that I have addressed myself to you: but, between ourselves, I and the Captain are not on the best of terms in the world; and I would not condescend to ask him such a favour. If, under these circumstances, you will have the goodness to drive with me to your mother's residence, on an early day, I shall be infinitely obliged."

And having achieved this speech, the conceited heir to Lord Fanmore passed his hand through his horrible hair, while he affected a delicious smile, which was nevertheless more like the grin of a baboon.

Crawford, who was sufficiently experienced in the machinations of designing men, to see that some sinister view was entertained by Mr. Stewart with regard to the marriage between the Captain and the beautiful Catherine,—Crawford

revolved in his mind the advantages that might accrue to him by an intimacy with the elder son of Lord Fanmore; he thereby saw a passport to the most select circles of fashion,—and an introduction, perhaps, even to those aristocratic *soirees*, which nothing but rank must hope to be admitted to, unless by the possession of powerful interest. Crawford saw all this; and regardless of his family, he determined to grant the favour which Mr. Stewart had demanded of him.

Only intent upon his own welfare, his own aggrandizement, and the gratification of all his desires, Crawford felt but little for the peace and tranquillity of his *mother*—a name, that once had magical influence over his mind;—and he cared probably much less for the happiness of his sister. Several days had now passed since he knew they had returned to the cottage after their trip to Southampton; and he proposed to call on them the following morning. To this Mr. Stewart assented with evident pleasure depicted upon his features; then, having arranged the exact hour, mode of conveyance, &c. &c., these two worthy individuals parted, the best friends in the world—one delighted with the success his visit had attained—the other equally satisfied on account of the acquaintance he had thus secured.

In the meantime, let us examine the motives, that induced the Honourable Mr. Stewart so ardently to desire the personal knowledge of Mrs. Crawford and Catherine; or, more correctly speaking, of the latter.

As long as only Captain Stewart called at the cottage, Arnold did not hurry himself to raise any impediment to the anticipated matrimonial project. At first he was alarmed that a concourse of visitors might flock thither; for as he was obliged to present himself occasionally at the humble dwelling, he would have run much risk of meeting individuals, whom he would there wish to avoid. But when he saw that the Crawfords were merely accustomed to receive the visits of Catherine's lover, he delayed his nefarious plans for preventing the union; for he was always enabled to ascertain when the young officer was in town, and take those opportunities of riding down to Bagshot; indeed, the few visits he had paid to the cottage, since James commenced the present schemes of imposture, were so arranged.

It may hence seem surprising that Arnold should desire eventually to blast the felicity of two affectionate lovers, since their attachment did not interfere with him. But Arnold had material reasons for putting insurmountable obstacles in the way of that marriage. His disposition was, if possible, more vindictive than it was hypocritical and cruel. Under the mask of friendship for the Crawfords, he had deadly intentions of vengeance and ruin. He was not satisfied with having seduced the elder daughter; he was not contented with having brought the son into the lowest abyss of vice and moral turpitude: but he was resolved effectually to destroy the peace of mind of all the family. Bearing also a deep grudge against Stewart, and jealous of the happiness which those whom he hated enjoyed, he loathed the thought of Catherine's fine prospects and the comfort she might be to her mother.

We have however found that Arnold has hitherto remained quiet, and has allowed the acquaintance between the young people to proceed smoothly,

and without molestation. Now he learnt, by means of Crawford, that Emily had disappeared; and it was with fiendish glee that he pondered on what must be the state of Mrs. Crawford's feelings, now that her elder daughter was lost; for he did not know that the poor afflicted mother was acquainted with Emily's disgrace, nor with the name of its author; inasmuch as Crawford, it may be remembered, was himself ignorant on these two points. The idea of that parent's agony gave joy to the ferocious ruffian, and fixed his resolutions of hastening the sum of her misery by another blow.

Never deficient in invention and subtle design, a few minutes' reflection told him that the Honourable Mr. Stewart abominated the match which his brother was about to conclude in five or six months, as derogatory to the rank and to the consequence of the Fanmore family. He therefore sought an interview with the said Mr. Stewart, on some pretence or another; gave a most enchanting description of the beauties of Catherine, and concluded by hinting "that such a girl was much more adapted to be the mistress of a nobleman's elder son, than the wife of the younger."

Mr. Stewart, filled with these pernicious ideas, and puffed up with vanity, actually made up his mind to dazzle Catherine by means of his rank, his prospects, and his promises, and thus seduce her from the paths of virtue;—so that two important ends would be gained;—he would effectually prevent the obnoxious matrimonial scheme, and would be enabled to exult over his brother in having succeeded in carrying off so rich a prize—an event which his unbounded self-conceit deemed certain. This wild plan is not to be wondered at, when we consider the extreme pride which governed the heart of him who formed it. The reader may therefore now perceive that the above-mentioned visit was paid to James, in order to secure means for the immediate prosecution of the scheme Mr. Stewart had devised. Thus Arnold—the crafty designing villain—possessed that sagacity which knew full well how to make tools and convenient instruments of all those who were best adapted to further his nefarious devices.

According to appointment, on the following morning Mr. Stewart drove up to Crawford's door in a handsome travelling carriage, and called for the brother of her whom he intended so coolly and so deliberately to ruin. Mrs. Crawford wondered to see the equipage stop at the gate; for it was different from either that of Lord Fanmore, or that of Captain Stewart. But her astonishment was redoubled, when her son, accompanied by a person she had never before seen, stepped out of the vehicle, and walked hastily up the little garden that led to the house.

The meeting with James was truly affecting on the part of Mrs. Crawford and Catherine. They covered him with kisses, embraced him a hundred times, forgetful of a stranger's presence; and they shed tears, for they thought how happy Emily might have been, had she participated in the pleasure of the interview! The youthful hypocrite was not at a loss for a few tears himself: these proofs of affection, as his mother and sister deemed them, were nigh at hand, when occasion required them to flow.

Mr. Stewart was now presented; and several apologies were made by Mrs. Crawford for not

having before noticed the honour that was done them. Presently all were comfortably seated; and then Mr. Stewart had time to examine the heavenly creature opposite to him.

Never had he seen such a combination of beauties—such faultless charms. He saw in Catherine a perfect angel, and his desires were immediately kindled with renewed flame. He was, however, cautious not to terrify her by gazing too long, or too rudely, and thus attract the notice of her mother. In a verbose and deceitful speech, he congratulated himself on the supreme satisfaction which he should experience, when he could call Catherine his sister-in-law; and this brought a blush into the lovely girl's cheek, which rendered her for the moment more attractive.

"You may consider it strange, madam," said he addressing Mrs. Crawford, "that I have not done myself the honour of calling on you before; but the fact is, that my father—madam—till the year should be expired—had enjoined—that is—had hinted, you know—"

"No apology is necessary, I assure you, Sir," returned Mrs. Crawford, comprehending the nature of her visitor's excuse, and believing it to be strictly correct.

Lord Fanmore, however, had said no such thing.

A few unimportant observations succeeded. Happily for Mr. Stewart's comfort, his brother did not arrive all day, being engaged on military duties; he and Crawford stayed to dinner, made up their minds to sleep that night at Bagshot, and return to London the following day. The evening passed away agreeably; the carriage, which had been sent to the above-named town, arrived to fetch the two gentlemen; and in one half hour they were seated before a cheerful fire in the hotel at Bagshot—the same hotel were Rivingstone had once put up. A conversation of but little importance whiled away a couple of hours, with the help of supper, and some good wine; after which they retired to their respective chambers.

The interview with his fond and deceived mother somewhat touched Crawford's heart. Despite of his dangerous advances on the road of crime,—still the reminiscence of the milestone—that fatal mark of a bloody deed—ever awoke unutterable feelings in the breast of the impostor. That deed—a deed at which the vilest ruffian would have trembled—now agitated his mind, and chased slumber away from his eyes. In vain he closed them—that day he had seen the milestone; and now his mental vision beheld on every side a fearful picture stamped with indelible colours.

At length a feverish sleep visited his eyes; but horrible dreams oppressed him.

Mr. Stewart reposed in a contiguous apartment, and was enjoying a sound repose, when suddenly a loud exclamation in the next chamber awoke him. He hurried on a dressing-gown, seized a light, and hastened into Crawford's room. On his entrance he saw that James was labouring under a violent night-mare. Running to the bed-side to awaken him, what was his astonishment when certain expressions, uttered wildly by Crawford in his sleep, revealed to him a secret he never could have suspected. Astounded by the sudden conviction that now burst upon him, Mr. Stewart stood a moment speechless—powerless: then, in

another instant he recovered his presence of mind, and gave Crawford a gentle shake. James awoke with a start, and opened his eyes to meet those of Mr. Stewart.

"You were crying so loudly in your sleep," said Stewart, "that I thought I had better—"

"Indeed! was I talking?" enquired James, with anxiety depicted on his countenance; for he recollected the dream, and shuddered lest he had betrayed the most important of secrets.

"Yes—you were only speaking of your affairs—that's all!" replied Mr. Stewart, with a significant smile. "But I must retire to rest: to-morrow we will converse on many matters," he added, an expression of triumph and malignity distorting his features.

Crawford understood the cause of that emotion too well; and his heart sank within him.

Mr. Stewart bade him a good-night, and once more sought his couch, saying to himself, as he closed his eyes, "Accident has placed the brother in my power; and the sister shall be yielded—aye, forced to my arms!"

* * * * *

On the following morning Mr. Stewart and James Crawford had a long and private conversation together, before they returned to London; and the young man found that the secret of his imposture was now known to *another*, besides the implacable Sophia Maxwell!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

There is no trust,
No faith, no honesty in men: all perjured,
All forsworn, all naught, all dissemblers.

SHAKESPEARE.

AGAIN was Crawford seated mournfully in his library—a few days after the visit to Bagshot,—and again was his dreadful meditation interrupted by the entrance of the Honourable Mr. Stewart.

A deep blush crimsoned Crawford's cheek, and his manner was confused, as the visitor made his appearance.

"My dear Crawford," said Stewart, "you know I promised to keep most inviolably your secret; but I told you there was a condition I should shortly name—a condition, which it lies chiefly in your power to fulfil—and that fulfilment will alone seal my lips."

"I must submit to every thing," said Crawford despairingly; "I could not at present endure an exposure. That I must be detected at last, however, is but too certain; still, like a man condemned to death, let me procrastinate the dread—the most ignominious catastrophe as long as possible."

"And would you even sacrifice the honour of your nearest and dearest relatives to save your own? Would you cast a stigma upon one of your family's members, in order to preserve your own character apparently unblemished—apparently pure and untainted?" demanded Stewart.

"I would—I must—I have no alternative—no other resource. O God! to what a condition am I reduced!—and yet I dare not retrograde—I dare not refuse to commit a hundred new crimes!" cried Crawford, wildly.

"Then, to retain your character, you must act as I direct you," said Stewart. "On that condition alone, I will pledge myself in the most solemn, in the most binding manner not to betray you.

Nay—more! only gratify me in what I am about to demand," continued Mr. Stewart with renewed emphasis, "and I will make you my most intimate friend before the world—I will introduce you to the most select society; and when at last your imposture,—pardon the word,—is discovered, I can say that you were a good-hearted fellow, and that I was deceived as well as the rest."

"Speak! you will astonish me much less than perhaps you imagine; for my soul is injured to guilt!" said James, in a low, hollow tone.

The wretched Crawford, dazzled by ambition, had made up his mind to sacrifice every thing, rather than resign the enjoyments of the golden harvests he was reaping, one moment before detection was inevitable.

Stewart allowed him a few moments for reflection, and then proceeded to unfold his damnable plot.

"Crawford," said he, "I love your sister!"

"Or rather you desire her," returned James, having already penetrated into the thoughts of his visitor.

"And at your hands I expect assistance in furtherance of—"

"Say no more; it shall be done!" interrupted Crawford, in a hollow voice, which desperation robbed of its usual tone. "Say no more: to-morrow my mother and Catherine shall be here. but you ask me a dreadful price, Stewart! However, my part of the business will be speedily settled—'tis for you to manage the rest; my mother never can suspect that I was an accessory—do you comprehend me?"

"Perfectly. Leave me the opportunity—that is all I require. Shall you go yourself to Bagshot to-day to fetch them hither to-morrow?" enquired Stewart.

"Yes,—in a couple of hours I shall depart," responded James. "And, Oh! God knows, I deserve all your mercy," he added, with a bitter smile; "for I am about to make myself a greater villain than ever I thought it possible to become. However—for me the future may yet be favourable, though embittered by awful reminiscences!"

The two wretches now separated; and, according to the promise given by Crawford, his mother and Catherine were next day located in Conduit Street.

Nothing could exceed the pleasure of Mr. Stewart. Fortunately, his brother—for wicked designs often meet with encouragement, arising from accidental circumstances—was so particularly engaged by military duties at Hounslow, that he was not likely to be in town for a week, within which time the sanguine son of Lord Fanmore flattered himself he should have accomplished his heinous purpose; for he was vain enough to believe that a single opportunity was almost sufficient for him to dazzle Catherine by promises, and bring her to his arms. He even thought that she would certainly rather be his mistress, than the Captain's bride!

On the same day that the ladies arrived in London, Mr. Stewart called, as if by accident, and paid a long visit, during which he behaved as a gentleman ought to conduct himself. The next day his visit was somewhat longer still; and as Mrs. Crawford considered it complimentary, James requested him to stay to dinner, and pass the evening with them.

Next day James, who had received a hint from him for whom he actually pandered to yield up his own sister, took his mother for a ride in his cabriolet, and contrived to waste a couple of hours by stopping at various shops, giving his orders, and purchasing little presents for the unsuspecting Catherine.

"To-morrow," said he, as they were returning home, "it shall be Kate's turn to accompany me."

"Poor girl—I am afraid we have left her too long already," exclaimed Mrs. Crawford, as, on reference to her son's watch, she discovered the time they had been absent.

But in the *interim* what had passed? As soon as her mother and brother had departed, Catherine sat down and amused herself with her needle-work for a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes, during which she thought of her lover. Then her ideas dwelt upon the disappearance of her poor sister, and tears came into her eyes. Suddenly the door opened, and Mr. Stewart stood before her. Annoyed at being thus discovered a prey to affliction, she hastily wiped her eyes, and greeted the visitor with all the modest warmth she would naturally show to the brother of her destined husband. He noticed the traces of her tears, and tenderly inquired the reason, still retaining the hand she had extended to him. Evading a direct answer, she stammered some excuse, and gently withdrew her hand: but the touch had thrilled through the veins of Mr. Stewart. They then both sat down, he drawing his chair somewhat closer to Catherine's than was necessary. But, of course, not suspecting his vile intentions, she felt no alarm—a slight embarrassment alone affected her.

"I am afraid, Catherine," said he—this was the first time he had called her by her Christian name, and she blushed deeply: "and still," continued the affected young man, "I need scarcely be afraid that I intrude, as we are not altogether strangers to each other, the intentions of my brother being—"

"Indeed, Sir," returned Catherine, "I am sorry you should have found me weeping; certain circumstances at the moment you entered, were present to my memory, and I could not help shedding tears."

"And can such a charming creature as yourself have cause for grief?" asked Mr. Stewart, affecting a consolatory tone.

"Where is there a heart that has not known it, Sir?" said Catherine, blushing deeply, and feeling annoyed at the compliment he paid her.

"For myself" said the wily Mr. Stewart; "I am happy—happy as a King—and why? because I have wealth, much more than my brother—I have a prospect of a title, he has none—I am regarded as the heir of a noble house—he is naught but an officer in the army, dependent on the caprices of a father for nearly all his income: that is not the case with me—I am differently situated."

Catherine thought within herself that these remarks might have been spared; she nevertheless said nothing.

The other proceeded.

"Therefore, you see, my dear girl, I have it in my power to make happy some other individual—some charming girl, who would share my prosperity—who would partake of my wealth—my expected honours—"

"Are you about to be married also, Sir?" enquired Catherine, with all the simplicity of her nature.

"I marry yet awhile! oh! no, dear Catherine—never, when my heart is full of your image—love scorns the ties of priestcraft, and ceremonial rites. Ah! let me throw myself at your feet—let me kiss that hand—let me sip the delicious sweets—"

And, with the most consummate insolence, suiting the action to the word, he threw himself before her, seized her delicate hand, and covered it with his odious kisses,

So stupefied, so astonished was she at the energy of his language, and the sudden impetuosity, or rather grossness of his behaviour, that she sat powerless for more than a minute: then, collecting her scattered ideas, she pushed him from her, withdrew her hand, and turning a look of contempt upon him, while tears gathered in her eyes, she rushed towards the door.

He sprang to his feet, and seized her by the arm. A violent scream escaped her—the door burst open—and Henry Hunter darted into the room.

Weak though he were from continued illness and sorrow, yet with gigantic force he laid hold upon the wretched profligate, and hurled him to the ground, from whence he rose slowly, all hell mustering in his bosom.

We have before said that he was a notorious duellist, and no coward. In a minute he recovered breath, and drawing a small case from his pocket, threw his card on the table.

"You shall hear from me again, Sir," cried he, his voice almost choked with wrath, as he pointed to his name, and addressed Mr. Hunter, who was occupied in reassuring Catherine of her safety.

Meeting with no reply, and stung with disappointment, as well as by vexation, Mr. Stewart rushed out of the room, and quitted the house.

In half an hour, Mrs. Crawford and James returned. The former was almost wild when she heard the treatment her daughter had experienced; the latter affected an excess of indignation; but his real internal feelings were terrible!

When all had partially recovered their usual equanimity of temper, Catherine related what had passed, to the astonishment of Hunter and Mrs. Crawford, who, experienced though they were in the ways of the world, could not conceive that so much villainy lurked in the breast of the brother of him to whom Catherine was engaged. After numberless comments upon the subject, Hunter requested a private conversation with Mrs. Crawford—a request which was immediately granted.

When they were alone together in another apartment, the young surgeon unfolded all that had happened since he last saw her. Nor was he disappointed in his anticipations of procuring pardon for the afflicted and penitent wanderer. The delighted mother, forgetting her daughter's shame, and only bent on recovering her once more, immediately wrote a long letter to Emily, informing her of her entire forgiveness. It was then arranged, that as Emily would shortly become a mother, she should remain with Mrs. Pembroke yet awhile, and that Mrs. Crawford should hasten to Guernsey, as soon as she could procure a comfortable residence for Catherine in a respectable family during her absence.

"For, James," said Mrs. Crawford, "is ac-

customed to receive numberless visitors and young men at his house, and it would scarcely be decent for her to stay with him;—witness the event of this morning! Nor can my daughter accompany me to Guernsey, Mr. Hunter; for I do not wish either her or James to be informed of their sister's disgrace."

James and Catherine were, nevertheless, made acquainted with the fact that Emily was safe, that she was then living in Guernsey, and that Mrs. Crawford was going thither to see her: but neither questioned their mother as to particulars,—the former being callous as to his family's welfare; the other accustomed to hear all her fond parent might choose to tell her, and to seek by interrogation for no more. We may readily suppose the delight of the amiable Catherine, and the feigned joy of Crawford. We say *feigned*, because he cared nothing about the matter—so reckless was he of a sister's felicity—so disappointed was he at the result of Mr. Stewart's attack upon the innocent Catherine.

Crawford presently sought an opportunity of speaking to Hunter alone.

"This must be arranged," said James, assuming a determined and resolute air, and alluding to Mr. Stewart's affair with Catherine.

"Yes: and it rests with you to bring the villain to an account," returned Hunter, not willing to risk his own life immediately, as he had made up his mind to avenge the wrongs of Emily in the blood of Arnold, or else die himself in the attempt.

"You are right," said James, his heart sinking within him—not from fear for his life, but through dread of an exposure at the hands of Mr. Stewart.

"This evening, or to-morrow morning early, will be time enough for me to bear the message—unless you have another friend——" began the young surgeon.

"None more fitting than yourself. I assure you, though our acquaintance has not been of more than a few hours' duration—yet your kindness to my mother—for I have heard how you interested yourself——"

"I require no thanks, Mr. Crawford," interrupted Hunter. "And now let us return to the ladies, who must not be permitted to imagine that a hostile meeting is intended!"

The long conversations and disclosures which had taken place since the departure of Mr. Stewart, had occupied so much time, that it was now six o'clock in the evening, and dinner was announced. But the meal passed almost untouched.

Hunter took his leave at an early hour, and returned to the hotel where he was staying.

And now let us relate what took place that night at the house of Lord Fanmore. What were the feelings of the Honourable Mr. Stewart?

Never was pride so humbled,—never was vexation more acute than in the bosom of this young man. He had hurried home to his apartment, and had paced the chamber in a frenzy of mingled resentment and disappointment, and then in deep humiliation.

"What!" thought he—"to be thus spurned by a low-bred girl? Good God! that I should have lived to see this day! But I will be revenged; for I will expose her brother to the world, and break her heart in the general crash!"

Such were his ideas, when suddenly he resolved to wait till he saw Crawford once more, and consult with him upon the best means to be pursued for the possession of his sister. He saw that force, and not promises—or that intimidation at least would be necessary; but his mind was worked up to that point at which he cared not what he did to succeed in the object of his pursuit, so long as his vindictive feelings were appeased by her disgrace. With regard to Hunter, Stewart made a vow to call him out the following day.

But in the midst of his reflections would come the damning conviction that he had been rejected—his promises disregarded—and his suit refused by a needy girl,—that a stranger's hand had hurled him to the ground—and that a stranger's hand had interrupted him when, perhaps, another minute might have completed his victory. All this came rushing to his memory—and he grew nearly distracted.

It was late when he retired to rest;—but that rest was eternal!

The violence of agitating passions produced apoplexy; and when the grey dawn of a wintry morning at length streamed in at his window, and his valet entered the chamber at the usual hour, he found his master a corpse!

And it was thus that Lord Fanmore's eldest son ended his days—and his ashes were deposited in the tomb of his forefathers.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Deeper and deeper grow the shades of guilt—
More complex too becomes the woof of crime—
Till murderous thoughts assume defined shapes.

Anonymous.

It may be that the reader feels we have too long neglected Sophia Maxwell, growing rapidly, as she was doing, upon our sympathies. The current of the other portion of our story however, has so swollen upon us,—the condition of the characters has gathered such a depth and urgency, and the *dénouement* becomes so pregnant of grave issues, each of which, too, may one day or another come nearly home to the experience of almost every person in this age of commingled, endlessly ramified, and absorbing interests—that it is impossible to grasp the case of each of the actors at the same moment, or to keep the whole with an adequate care constantly before the reader. It is good, besides, that there be pauses and alternations in man's contemplation of the imagined as well as of the actual; just as it is proper that the bow should not always be kept bent.

But Miss Maxwell has not been forgotten; and now we resume her story.

The reader will not require to be told that Sophia's mastery over James Crawford was not only complete and all-sufficient, by the time that she had exacted from him the promise at the Mermaid Tavern to return the money obtained from her father; but he dreaded that mastery, as if foreseeing that it would end in all the horrors of the doom which she imprecated upon his head, and swore that she had given herself up to ensure.

We therefore have not paused to detail how strictly to the letter the thing demanded of the youthful imposter was fulfilled by him, at the hour and place named by the impassioned and revengeful girl; but here—as in the last few chap-

ters of our tale—we hasten forward, and leaping over weeks and months, only take such backward glances as may serve to fill up satisfactorily the picture of incidents necessary to a clear comprehension of the story and a proper development of character.

Sophia still resided with Mrs. Lambert, and still pursued with unceasing assiduity and earnestness her two missions;—ministering to the comfort of her father, who had been so unexpectedly smitten to the ground from a lofty position; and, with still more eager and unswerving intent, pursuing her fell purposes towards Crawford and his accomplice. The more amiable and affectionate of these pursuits must for a little detain us.

The reader will remember that the once flourishing Mr. Maxwell, Sophia's father, had been cast into prison, accused of a vile fraud in his mercantile transactions!—in short, of a gross vitiation of one of those documents which are continually passing between men in extensive commercial business.

He had lain, accordingly, for a considerable number of weeks within the dismal cells of Newgate.

The day for his trial at length arrived; but the particulars of the solemn arraignment and its issue we do not detail, at least as an Old Bailey scene, farther than to state that the daughter, all radiant, appeared in court, rivetting every eye by the self-possession and propriety of her demeanour, and that the prosecution entirely broke down, inasmuch as the chief witness had absconded. This was Mr. Maxwell's late principal clerk, who, in fact, it now became quite manifest, should have been the accused.

It was upon this announcement to the desolated prisoner that he—poor well-meaning man—perhaps for the first time in his life, spoke with heroic magnanimity.

But we should previously observe that the venerable judge thus addressed him:—

"Prisoner at the bar, but so immediately to go forth into the world a gentleman of unblemished character, hard has been your recent fate; but as for this false arraignment you will have the greatness of mind thus to console yourself,—you will remember, as the admiring world is sure to do, that if you have borne the weight and bitterness of doubt or obloquy for a season, it has been by no perversion of the forms of law nor the principles of constitutional freedom:—nay, more, that your grievous case is a noble example of how impartially the administration of justice is pursued in our land,—pursued, however, by short-sighted and imperfect man, so that the innocent at times dwell under a cloud while the guilty go free and in the sunshine of public favour. Mr. Maxwell, permit me to repeat that; you may comfort yourself, by not only going forth a more honoured man, more sincerely looked up to than you ever were, even when in the zenith of your prosperity; but that this day's proceedings will redound to the good and the glory of your country—falsely accused though you have been—by proclaiming not only how keen is the edge of the sword of justice in Great Britain, and how blind to the rank of the accused are its administrators; but how seldom the innocent are long permitted to suffer amongst us."

"My Lord," answered the merchant, "I shall

strive to feel and act in accordance with your sentiments; and let me add, should an abiding and profound consideration on my part of all the calamities which have lately befallen me, issue in greater humility of mind and watchfulness of conduct, the grievous dispensations will be seen to have been appointed by an all-wise Father above, for my wholesome chastisement—for my eternal good."

There was upon this a murmur of intense sympathy and homage, not a rude vociferous cry, within the walls of the crowded court,—so intense, subduing, and heart-touching, that even the officers of justice,—aye, and the venerable judge himself, added to its power if not by voice, at least by fixed admiration; so that it needed the occurrence of some other incident of parallel interest to arrest and direct the flood of sympathy and tender thoughts that filled the Hall.

Nor was such an event wanting; for just as Mr. Maxwell ended his short speech, his lovely daughter dropt to the floor, unable to bear up against the tide of emotion within her, hereto so pent and so heroically resisted.

But the scene appeared to acquire even still a higher sublimity, when the father sped to her succour, taking her into his arms with all the yearnings of a parent, and withdrawing through the dividing croud.

The merchant proceeded to an hotel hard by, where Sophia remained for several days in a precarious condition. When she was fully restored to health again, she suggested,—her father yielding to each thing the now provident and thoughtful girl recommended,—that he should for a time make the inn his home, while she herself had her lodgings with the good Mrs. Lambert. It was also as this arrangement was come to, that she put into his hands the thousands obtained from the alarmed impostors, it being for the first time that a syllable on the subject had been uttered to him.

"How and whence is this, my child?" cried the astounded merchant.

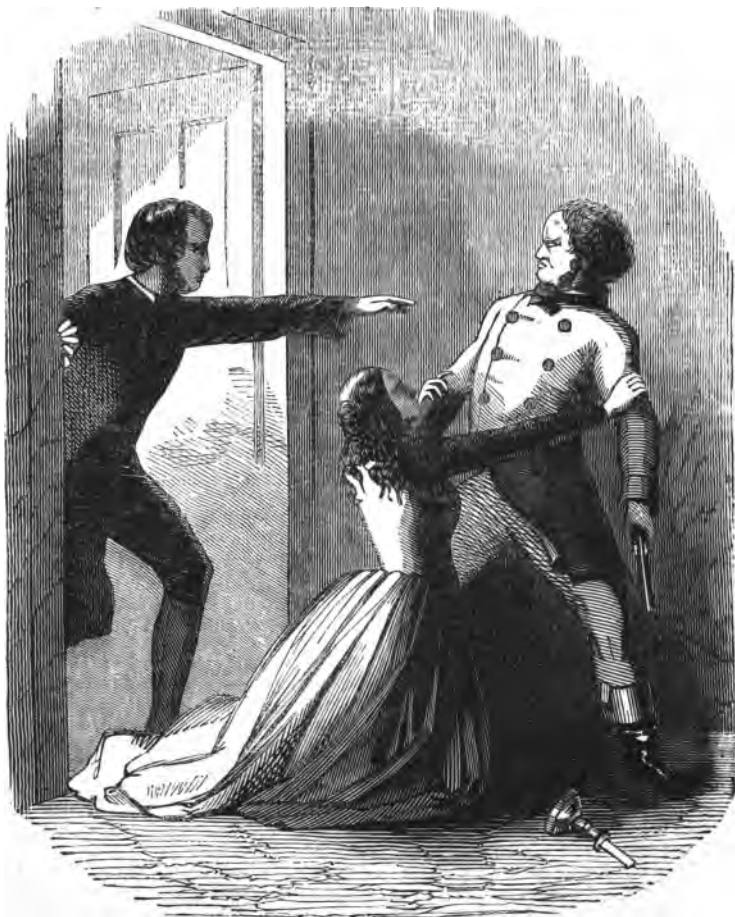
"At present, dear parent, inquire no farther; only believe me, it hath been honestly come by, and is, in short, but a part of what was your own."

Such was the now admirable, but ruined young lady's response.

Mr. Maxwell could only weep on all this, and smother his child with his caresses.

The earnestness and exactions of one of Sophia's late daily occupations were now slackened,—her father required not half of the intensities of her nature to be lavished on him. Nothing but joy and prosperity met her steps, when she approached his temporary residence at the hotel; a circumstance which at times she thoughtfully and sadly contrasted with her own secret and increasing bosom-tumults and actual encounters with trouble.

Think of the young, frail, delicate girl, single-handed, having to contend with consummate and experienced villains, not surpassed for hypocrisy, felonious daring, and actual enormity by any that ever were a curse and a pollution in the great Babel of London! Who would not have pitied her when thus beset, independently altogether of the terrors and the remorse within, for the soothing of which she knew of no balm? And yet how preferable her condition and prospects to the position and dangers of the miscreants against whom she cherished such an implacable spirit!



These miscreants themselves, Arnold and his pupil Crawford, had by this time not only mutual fears of one another, but frequent occasions of discourse that seemed to be bordering nearer and nearer upon the stormy. James's negligence relative to his tutor's letters, whose contents were of the serious, even desperate nature already mentioned; especially that document in which he spoke of *sending Sophia to a never waking sleep*, was more than once a theme of angry accusation and stern insinuation,—the impeachments growing fiercer and more menacing ever after the youth's vain efforts to obtain the document from Dimmock. It was not at all a clear case that the letter might not yet see the light.

Still, how much sorer did Arnold's feelings of bitterness grow, when he found that the girl whom he had hitherto spoken of uniformly and represented as the silliest of her sex, had so mastered Crawford,—his own proficient scholar and accom-

plished partner, as that at her nod thousands of pounds were on the shortest notice to be refunded by the *firm*, if the word may be so used! (

"Chicken-hearted,—blunderer,—doomed fool—accursed simpleton!" and such like terms escaped the arch-impostor in his private moments, and very nearly obtained audible expression even to the hearing of the youth who was so designated.

"And how otherwise would you yourself have acted, beset by such an inveterate, plotting, and I must now say, clever foe, as she has already shown herself—possessed one way and another as she already is of matters so exceedingly inconvenient for us?" was the question which James again and again put to Arnold, who was driven to madness nearly by the issue.

"I would have acted in some way very different from that in which you have fooled us," the elder miscreant would answer. "First of all I

would not have allowed her ever to have become possessed of the knowledge she has obtained of us through your want of circumspection. Do you suppose, James Crawford, that I should have been so blind as to let a being whose person was as familiar to me, as hers has been to you, disguised in any way whatever, lie for a length of time stretched at my very foot, and not have known who the creature was? Even when confronted by the fiendish thing at the Mermaid, I should have dealt successfully with her,—I should, had there been no other resource, have whirled her from my presence, and even taken care that she should never have troubled me or other man more;—I should have killed her on the spot rather than have been so fooled and fleeced!”

In this inconsequential way would Arnold vituperate and talk; so that after all Crawford would shut his mouth, by saying;—

“Why do you not take some measures safe for yourself, and for preserving me from her constant persecution, seeing that you think the thing is so easily to be done, and seeing also that you look upon my services for both of our advantages, as being absolutely necessary?”

Such home-questions generally put the arch plotter to a non-plus, and drove him to some other topic, perhaps of complaint; but at length he found it was no longer in his power to stand Crawford’s banter; or rather, that unless some more skilled actor were employed, another demand would be made upon the firm’s bank, by the said clever and persevering Sophia Maxwell.

In short, she had been to the Mermaid Tavern once more, dressed up in Tommy Lambert’s Sunday suit, and with, if possible, greater spirit and power than on the first occasion, had demanded a further sum as an indemnity for all the wrongs she herself had suffered!

“She makes the peremptory demand,” said James one morning, after having for hours almost despaired of finding out his tutor; “and eight o’clock this night is the precise time when I am to throw down the cash in the parlour of the Mermaid. Had I not found you out in time, my friend,” added James, “what reckon you, might have been the consequence? Now, however, you can prepare and bethink yourself how we are to act. I shall implicitly follow your directions—and surely after that, if we are permitted to extend our game untroubled by the fiend, I shall be spared somewhat of your angry and biting discourses relative to the incapacity which you have recently discovered to be so characteristic of my conduct on certain unexpected occasions.”

“There is no help for it, I see,” answered Arnold, “although at the most serious inconvenience for myself at this particular time. But there must be no more blundering—no more of that white-livered pusillanimity that will permit a weak, fallen, immodest girl to bend a man in such a degree as to make him crouch like a hound under the lash. I shall confront the she-devil along with you, and appoint the Mermaid itself as the place where we shall meet, say, half an hour prior to her coming as named by herself.”

“I advise, my friend, that at all events we provide ourselves with the thousand pounds; you know not what a turn affairs may take. At any rate, it is easy to keep hold of the money, if that be safe, and take it home with us again,” observed James.

“I shall see her in hell-fire before she screw a farthing from me or from you either, in my presence,” cried Arnold. “We may and can arm ourselves with a large sum, it is true. I am proud to say it; but I intend to arm myself with something else which will go into an exceedingly small compass, and do a deal of work nevertheless if rightly handled.”

The worthies parted, the elder of them unhesitatingly satisfied that he should, with his practised dexterity foil the girl, and show himself a man of extraordinary fertility of invention and of consummate tact, although not at all fond of the occasion, seeing that Sophia knew too much of their imposture to be altogether safe. On the other hand, while the younger party still harboured a degree of restraint on account of Arnold’s frequent severe lecturings about his blunders and pusillanimity,—the very last of these, comparing him to a crouching hound under the lash,—and while James also still deemed it strange and unsatisfactory, that he was so much kept in the dark relative to the movements of his leader, he rather liked the idea that Arnold was going to encounter Sophia with such a lofty conception of his own astuteness, fully anticipating a scene where the practised villain was likely to come off second best.

“I could tell him,” said James to himself, “that he will catch a Tartar; but I think it better to let him find it out at his own leisure.”

Time halts not;—the hour approached for the Mermaid meeting; and each of the several parties was punctual to the arrangements, as already indicated.

Miss Maxwell was in the boy’s habiliments as before, and was escorted by the good and serviceable Mrs. Lambert; who was specially instructed to wait at the bar of the tavern, and to come to the young lady’s assistance on the slightest call to that effect.

At the same time Sophia did not anticipate a violent or noisy scene. For herself she had resolved to preserve the most complete command of her temper possible, aware of the subtlety of those whom she expected to confront; for Crawford had told her, with the view of affrighting and preventing her from further teasing or persecuting him, that if she persisted in her threats he would to a certainty bring his influential and widely-respected, as well as known friend, Mr. Arnold, to reason with her, and make the fitting replies.

“Let the widely-known and respected Mr. Arnold, *your friend*,”—laying a significant emphasis on the latter words,—“be brought; and I shall, as best my powers serve me, face him,” had been the answer to what was intended as a fore-warning threat.

Behold, then, the pair of impostors seated in the parlour of the tavern, and see how they are prepared for action! Arnold has taken his seat nearest to where Sophia will enter, as if to be the principal speaker on that side, and the principal performer too.

“James!” said he, “here are a few oranges—they are of the best sort that can be procured, and most delicious specimens of fruit. I propose that you make free with them; and should an opportunity occur of employing sweet words and the polite, you may as well hand this or that one,—mind, none others, to your *quondam* mistress—

flattering the wanton slut in thy blindest manner. Either one or the other of that pair of oranges has had inserted into it a *quietus*. In the mean time, whilst you may perchance have the opportunity of doing the *pretty* in the way named, I shall sip my negus; and should the she-fiend happen to be thirsty, a glass shall be ordered for her, which, if I *mix the ingredients*, will inevitably do us a kindness before to-morrow's sunrise."

Crawford had slightly shuddered more than once, during these murderous details and directions, but only said,—“I have promised to follow your instructions implicitly and to the letter in everything, and mean this night to abide, at all hazards, by your words.”

The punctual Sophia was, as before said, at the Mermaid at the appointed hour precisely; and she entered in her former disguise the parlour where the gentlemen were seated, a few moments after they had come to the understandings between themselves just now described.

The moment she appeared, as a handsome boy, Arnold and Crawford rose and bowed with a repetition of mute courtesies which were intended to seem affected; for the elder villain thought to browbeat her by his sense of the ridiculous and the indelicate as shown by her; and either to confound her by exciting her feelings of shame, or at once to drive her from her propriety by arousing her indignation.

Sophia, however, was so far a match for him, that she quietly took a chair and seated herself directly opposite to the gentlemen on the other side of the table, and also keeping so near to the door that she could instantly open it, and call for any one who might be at the bar.

Being seated, she fixed her untwinkling, unshrinking, and searching eyes upon Arnold, without saying a word, but as if looking him through and through, and reading his villanies—nor did the dumb-show cease, till he was made ashamed of his wasted pantomimic-piece of performance, sitting down in some degree of discomposure and unable to repress his vexation.

“Perdition take her!” said he; “shame she has never had.”

These words, although not intended for any one's ear, did not escape the heroine; but still they moved her not. She sat fixed and unfurried, resolved that she should not be the first to utter anything further than the words which she now did:—

“I am here on business. I expect that it will be, business-like, briefly brought to an end.”

“Pray, madam, or pretty boy, as you may here wish to be styled, will you explain to me the exact nature of the business and the grounds?” said Arnold.

“The fellow on your left has already done all this, and it needeth not repetition,” answered Sophia.

In the meanwhile Arnold having ordered glasses and the elements fitting for the negus, was beginning in a very graceful manner, it is true, to execute these little offices of the table; neither did anything of a particular nature occur during the absence of the waiter, except that Crawford began lustily to assail the oranges, handing over the appointed two in his blindest, most winning manner, to the side of the board where Sophia was seated, merely saying, “These are excellent fruit.”

As the waiter was returning with his stored tray, she, with every semblance of simplicity, took up one of the oranges and then another; and in the way which people naturally do with such delicious things, kept smelling them both,—the one in the right hand, and the other in the left, not merely to enjoy the rich perfume which they shed, but as if instituting a pretty little process of comparison between their virtues. The moment the servant withdrew, however, she again said,—

“I am here on business, and expect that it will be in a business-like way, speedily brought to a close. Your wine and your time are nothing to me. To business, I again order you!”

“Order you!” exclaimed Arnold.

“Yes, order you! and I shall be obeyed ere you have time to swallow that tumbler of drink before you,” were her next words.

Upon this she opened the door and quietly called upon Mrs. Lambert, who in a moment came to her, there being, however, neither excitement nor deep design betrayed by either of the females, so as to startle the miscreants, who mutely listened and looked on for the few moments that the disguised Sophia intimated her wishes to the other female.

“Here,” said Miss Maxwell, “are two beautiful and delicious oranges which these gentlemen have presented to me. Keep them for Tommy, whose Sunday suit I so freely use, for I am no fruit eater. But in the meanwhile wait without; I shall not be detained three minutes.”

Thus saying and doing, she again shut the door; and now she planted her back against it. She again spoke and in that subdued and terse manner, of which we have before now taken notice,—smiting both heart and ear with a pith of emphasis that were remarkable.

“Ye base men, you are much deeper in my power than even that fellow Crawford, dreams. Fitzgerald and Dimmock! oh! I know the history,—the pedigree of both,”—and Sophia most scornfully uttered the words.—“Of you Mr. Arnold, or what else you may be called, I believe I shall have quite a labour to obtain the adequate tracings, so tortuous and shaded is your course. But this much I know, these delicious oranges are drugged—their perforations were at the first glanced perceived by me; and prussic acid hath a strong and offensive smell,”

Arnold started;—perhaps never before did such unexpected and terrible words strike as a knell on his ear.

“Be composed,” said Sophia quietly.—“I wish not, mean not, unless by your own folly driven to it, to divulge a syllable to your hurt at present. The fellow Crawford knows my reasons for forbearance, and you, his instructor, must also have had them often told you. But I repeat these oranges shall go instantly to a chemist's shop, and this letter to a magistrate's office,”—holding up the very document which she had obtained, with such ease, from Dimmock at Hounslow,—the letter that contained the proposals to send her to a long and dreamless sleep,—“unless” she added, “you actually comply with my demand.”

The miscreants trembled from head to foot, and had they meant it, they had not for a few seconds the power to pounce upon her and momentarily stop her breath; for even Arnold ejaculated with the woe that may be conceived to characterise the wailing and the groans of the damned,

"We are utterly undone;—wholly in her power."

"Yes! utterly in my power, and wholly at my will!—But give me the thousand pounds, which I have demanded,—and I will permit you to go on still further, filling up your cup of iniquities, without whispering a word to your danger or peril."

It need hardly be told that, between such potent proofs of a murderous conspiracy against her, being forced to become public, and the pulling out of the pocket the demanded sum, there was hardly any comparison as respected motive and convenience. Accordingly as quickly as the shaking fingers of the elder villain could handle the bank notes, and the faltering tongue could count them, the money was paid down.

Leaving for a time the pair of worthies to suck their oranges and discuss their negus as best they could; we go with Sophia to her father on the following morning.

"Sophia, my beloved child, how so early this cold morning? but you are gleesome, I perceive, and therefore never too early," cried the merchant.

"Here are a thousand pounds for you, father. You know, since we went so terribly back in the world, it was not to be expected that either I should receive the addresses of any suitor, or that any would address me. Perhaps you may say it was very good in Mr. Crawford to return you so soon the sums he borrowed of you; for such are the thousands that I have brought, and such the assistance that at first after your sorest trial was of such service to us."

"Excellent girl! that thou art,—I never before knew of half thy merits,—of half thy judgment and prudence. And now when I think of it, perceiving thy good fortune as well as uncommon discretion, I shall make thee act like my little clever man of business, in an instance or two, and thou shalt have all the proceeds of thy agency for thine own pin-money," said the happy father.

"Oh! I shall delight in the variety of occupation, and prove myself, I hope, expert," answered the overjoyed young lady.

"Well then, first of all, there is a man of rank at the West End, Sir George Mornay by name, and who, by the way, is related to that same Crawford. This person several years ago obtained in the course of my general agencies, several pipes of wine of me, for which, however, I have never yet received a farthing. Indeed, the circumstances came to be almost entirely forgotten by me; but flashing across my remembrance the other day, I bethought me that it might be as well to have the cash, more especially as the debt was never entered on any of the books that are in the hands of my creditors, who have acted so inexorably towards me. Do thy best, my child, to serve thyself in this matter first of all."

Thus spoke the merchant; and with every sort of alacrity did Sophia set to work, having, after a patience and acuteness of research of which few young ladies are capable, actually traced the West End baronet one evening to the house of James Crawford in Conduit Street!

Sophia was greatly surprised at arriving at the knowledge of this fact: for she had often heard from Crawford, during their days of intimacy, that he not only maintained no correspondence with his relative, but that he had not ever seen him to his knowledge.

It, however, struck Sophia that perhaps Sir George, allured by the reputed good fortune of his relation, had thought it prudent to make overtures of friendship; and she resolved to avail herself of this opportunity of seeking an interview with the baronet.

She accordingly ascended the steps leading to Crawford's front door, and knocked gently—but not timidly.

The servant who answered the summons was not one whom Sophia remembered to have seen when she and her parents had visited at the mansion in Conduit Street.

"Is Mr. Crawford at home?" she asked.

"No, Mr. Crawford is not within, ma'am," answered the bedizened lacquey, "but is early expected to return. Pray who shall I say has called?"

"Oh, I shall just step up for a few minutes to his drawing room; and if he does not soon make his appearance, I will leave a note for him," she replied.

Accordingly our heroine was admitted, satisfied by this time that Sir George Mornay was a slippery debtor, and would have to be encountered unawares; and also curious to know what sort of footing the baronet might be upon with the youthful miscreant, by whom her ruin among the fair ones of the earth had been effected.

"There is a gentleman in the drawing-room, ma'am," observed the valet, as Miss Maxwell ascended the stairs, "who also waits for Mr. Crawford's return. You will perhaps prefer stepping into the library, ma'am."

"Oh! no; I prefer company," said the persevering Sophia; at the same time being afraid lest Sir George Mornay should escape her, thoroughly believing that the gentleman alluded to by the lacquey, must be the veritable baronet.

To the drawing-room she went; and, sure enough! there stood, leaning thoughtfully upon the mantelpiece in that chamber, a person of the most gentlemanly appearance, but who started with a terrible expression of surprise and dread as he turned round and was accosted in these words:—

"I believe I am right, sir,—you are Sir George Mornay. Sir George Mornay!" shrieked Sophia the next moment, with the voice and air of maniac joy, as the light of the candle streamed upon the countenance of the individual in that room: "I believe I have at last found you out. Ha! ha! ha!" and she fell fainting to the floor from the overstraining of her passion.

"My God! what is to be done? she is senseless!" exclaimed the baronet, leaning over her: then, fearful of alarming the house, he hastened to remove her bonnet and shawl to give her air—and from a scent-bottle on the mantel he poured some perfume on his handkerchief, with which he bathed her brow. "Perdition seize this misadventure!" he murmured to himself: "if Crawford should return ere I can get rid of her! Ruin stares me in the face! What can be done! Discovery—damnation!—it is madness! Better risk any thing than that!"

Sophia opened her eyes; and as they encountered the well known face that bent over her, she started from the sofa on which he had placed her. But weak, and overcome with the thousand conflicting emotions that filled her mind, she staggered, and sank upon her knees.

"Sir George Mornay!" she exclaimed, wildly, and with hysterical laughing and crying; "the price of the wine I come for, and shall have, Sir George, before I quit this house. Oh! what have I not discovered this evening! But you are in my power. The money for this wine, Sir George!" she added, although it was not the wine nor its price that was creating this unnatural vehemence. "But I see it all, I see it all! No more names from my lips at the present,—only the price of the worthless wine must be my apology for the tumult that is within me and the riot I make."

"Sophia! silence—not another word!—silence, I say—and all shall be as you will!" cried Sir George Mornay.

"Silence!—no—never—never! Vengeance in mine—not a tame silence,—vengeance on mine enemies!" she screamed frantically;—and now she clung to the baronet's knees in a sort of insane bewilderment and without any defined intent.

"Damnation!" cried Sir George Mornay; and fixing his hands with desperate violence round her neck, he sought to throttle her—for he was no longer the master of his terrible passions.

Sophia struggled—the table was overthrown—the candles were extinguished—and the room was now in total darkness.

"Murderer! release me!" shrieked Sophia.

"Viper and wretch! receive thou thy death after all at my dealing;" and with this he pulled from his pocket a massive pistol to brain her, crying,—“Die as it is meet for thee!”

And brained she would assuredly have been, had not the door suddenly opened—a flood of light streamed into the room—and a person appeared upon the threshold, where he stopped short for a moment, in horrified amazement at the scene which met his eyes.

But he was in time to prevent the dread catastrophe; and he who thus strangely became the saviour of Sophia's life, was none other than the young surgeon—Henry Hunter.

For a moment Sir George Mornay remained stupefied—transfixed by the sudden appearance of Henry Hunter; and the scowl that distorted his features denoted the fiercest hate.

Then,—recovering his presence of mind the next moment,—he threw down the pistol—seized his hat—dashed away from him the affrighted girl who was still in a kneeling posture at his feet—and, making one desperate rush towards the door, hurled Hunter violently against the wall, and darted down the stairs as if pursued by rabid hounds.

The young surgeon was stunned by the fall; and several minutes elapsed ere he awoke to consciousness.

When he was enabled to collect his scattered ideas, he rose painfully from the floor, and entered the room to ascertain whether the lady was frightened—who she was—and what had been the motive of Sir George Mornay's murderous attempt upon her.

But he searched in vain: she was gone! The fact was that Sophia readily avoided the necessity of giving explanations which might lead to an inference of the wrongs she had received at the hands of her seducer Crawford; and, in the excitement which followed the dread scene of this evening, she cruelly abandoned the young

man who had saved her life, without endeavouring to restore him to his senses, but not however without previously convincing herself that he was indeed only stunned, and not killed.

Hunter felt annoyed at her ungracious disappearance; and he sighed, as he murmured to himself. "But it is ever the way with the world!"

His first impulse was now to summon a domestic and institute inquiries relative to the young lady:—but he forebore on second thoughts—for it struck him that she had departed only to avoid explanations, and he was too delicate in feeling and possessed too much good taste to take any proceeding that might arouse an impertinent curiosity with regard to her, amongst Crawford's menials.

For similar reasons he resolved not to allude to the occurrence of the evening to James himself; for he had too high an opinion of the youth—in consequence of all that Mrs. Crawford had fondly assured him concerning the high principles of her son—to suppose that he was in any way an accomplice in the atrocious deed sought to be perpetrated beneath that roof.

His accidental appearance at that particular juncture must be explained by stating that, having vainly sought for Arnold, during the two or three days he had been in London for the purpose, he called in Conduit Street to ascertain if Crawford himself would, of his own accord, and in the course of conversation, say any thing concerning that miscreant; and on learning from the hall-porter that James was not at home, he had intimated his intention of walking up stairs and waiting for him. Dispensing with the attendance of the servant who offered to conduct him to an apartment, he was on his way to the library where, as the domestic informed him, there were lights and a good fire,—when, on passing the door of the drawing-room he heard the last words of the altercation within,—and thence his sudden appearance.

Having waited for nearly an hour without seeing Crawford, Henry Hunter took his departure.

On the following morning he called early at Sir George Mornay's residence;—but the answer he received to his inquiries was, that the baronet had departed an hour previously, in a post-chaise, the respondent knew not whither.

"This may be a false move to throw me off my guard, and avoid an interview," said Hunter to himself, as he turned away from the door: "but I will never rest till I shall have discovered him!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

And as she pursued her strange and wonderful career,—intent on vengeance, which must be complete to be satisfactory, she encountered adventures of no common interest.

MATURIN.

AFTER a night of troubled dreams, Sophia awoke to pursue some of those trains of thought which, broken and unsatisfactory, had occupied her mind ever since she hasted from Conduit Street, after the alarming scene with Sir George Mornay.

"Most strange and incredible," she at times said to herself, "have been several of the passages of my own life, young as I yet am. Surely many pass on to a great age without ever experiencing one such eventful crisis as has occurred in my career, almost every week since first that villain

Crawford was introduced to our family; and for aught that I can see I am destined to have other and perhaps still more extraordinary ordeals to encounter before many months speed away. But is there no way by which I may avoid all further excitement and tumult in connexion with him or his infamous companion? Can I not save by my dear father and his interests alone, flinging from me all harassment of thought and of incident in relation to that impostor with whom my deepest guilt hath been incurred? Ah!" she continued in her cogitations,—“I never can disunite my fate with his;—somehow or another, I strongly feel, must my life's current, my heart's throbbings, be joined and blended with his; for it seems I cannot exist without rushing with the most earnest and prying curiosity into the most secret circumstances of his dark and tortuous path!"

In fact, the scene at James's house with the baronet, had but served to awaken her eagerness in the pursuit of the villainies of the couple, having even now the conviction clear and perfect within her, that she should before many hours passed over her head, have revealed to her other most unusual facts concerning her destroyer and his hateful colleague.

At the very moment when Miss Maxwell was pursuing such cogitations as have now been expressed, she was going through sundry little preparations for a journey to the country,—to that district where she was most likely to fall in with points of information, or directing hints for further development,—in short towards Bagshot Heath. It was there that she expected to have an interview with old Dimmock. Accordingly at an early hour of the day she posted thither, leaving the chaise however, at a stabling at some considerable distance from Dimmock's cottage.

Alone and on foot she fancied that she might before night-fall make even at random, some important discoveries. Accordingly away she hied,—the eager girl holding in as light a manner the inclement season of the year, as if she had been forest-bred.

Arrived at Bagshot Heath and the cottage before visited by her, she was not a little disappointed to find that its doors and shutters were closed. There was no sign of a living creature of any kind about the place; nor on making inquiries of the persons who were the nearest neighbours of the spot, could she gather a syllable to serve her farther than that the cottage had been shut up for some weeks, but to what part of the country the late inmates had gone was altogether a mystery.

This was rather a disheartening beginning; however it did not repress the eagerness of the prying Sophia; for away to traverse the fir-groves near Bagshot heath, she bent her steps, a keen frost giving a firm ringing path that lent energy to the pace, and life to the agile frame. To be sure, she had no very definite object in view; at the same time there was borne in upon her mind the persuasion that she was on the threshold of an interesting discovery, and this still more than the bracing nature of the weather, invigorated her thoughts and steps.

"On yonder rising ground," said she, "stands a ruined tower which the people call the Obelisk. Thither I shall haste and see whether I can meet the romantic at such a spot as every scribbler

is sure to people with phantoms, tragic occurrences, and so forth, in order to work out their lying tales, impoverished blunderers that they are,—forgetting that in the broad light of day, and in the open streets of busy London there is more of what is really of absorbing interest and dramatic withal, than poet ever feigned in his hackneyed imaginings about old castles, dismantled monasteries, or deserted caverns. Methinks that in the one case with which I myself am somewhat acquainted,—that of Sophia Maxwell—*The Merchant's Daughter*, as the story may be entitled, there have been fact, incident, and intense experience sufficient to harden me against the fictitious creations of the romancists!"

While the clever girl was thus discoursing with herself—awakened by guilt, cruel usage, and the terrible events already detailed, so as to be stirred to daring and malign purposes, far beyond what any one would before have dreamt to be within the compass of the spoilt creature's powers of mind—she had been making good progress towards the Obelisk. Having come close up to its walls, she sought for the means of ingress but found that she was effectually shut out, so that nothing so yielded to her efforts to gain admission, as would enable her farther to satisfy her curiosity in that quarter. She was therefore on the eve of taking her departure, and only tarrying to consider in what direction next to bend her steps, saying to herself, "Really this promises to be as sterile of interest, for my romantic entertainment, as it is wintry, bleak, and barren."

At that moment she fancied she heard moans, as if of some creature who must be within the walls and blocked up space of the ruins. She naturally therefore applied her ear as closely as possible to the building, and very soon distinctly made out that there were more than one human inhabitant of the dreary place, and also that there was grievous sorrow there, if not the fearful perpetration of crime.

It was therefore but in obedience to the heart's strong promptings that the courageous girl repeatedly called out in her own sweet and beautiful accents,—“Is there any one within to whom I can lend assistance,—to whom I can be of service?"

No response was made for some little time, during which interval the wail, as it appeared of a little girl, waxed louder and louder. She repeated her enquiry, and at length a man's voice replied gruffly, "I shall force a way, and after that it matters little how misery like ours is treated, for it cannot be made worse."

Upon this Sophia remained to witness the result of what appeared from the noise to be desperate efforts to burst the barrier between them. At length the door gave way, disclosing a heart-rending scene,—a strong man with terrible looks, breathless from his efforts,—a little girl with wretchedness strongly expressed in every feature and circumstance,—and a female, most probably the wife and mother, stretched at the child's feet, and seemingly lifeless.

"How and why is this?" cried the compassionating Sophia, rushing to the prostrate body in order to discover if there were life within the veins. "She is not quite dead," exclaimed the young lady,—“she will live,—I shall save her."

Upon this, with all the speed and tenderness of a ministering angel, she hastened to bathe the

prostrate female's face with water; and in a few minutes, the woman manifested signs of revival, shortly after opening her eyes, and anon to recover so far as to be able to sit upright and to speak.

"It is hunger and starvation that is wrong with her," said the man, who at first appeared to be frightfully sullen and also resolute, on some desperate purpose, but now melting, however, at the sight of so much sweetness and kind ministry as the young lady displayed;—"it is hunger and starvation that is wrong with her, and something else."

By this time Sophia had got to a part of the interior where she not only discovered a brazier with something smouldering within it, but that it was the blue flame and the suffocation of charcoal which it sent forth, having, till the opening was made for her ingress, been most dense and overpowering where the woman lay.

"What means all this?" cried Sophia; "were you resolved on self-destruction? and was it with all your consents—the poor woman's and the little girl's will, that this was done, man?" she demanded, with looks of horrified amazement.

These questions were so rapid, and with Miss Maxwell's recently-acquired authoritativeness so potently put, that the man seemed to become meek under them; for he answered,—
"It was with all our wills,—if that child can be said to have understood what we were about. Nothing but starvation stared us in the face,—starvation of cold and hunger for them, and the jail for me if found alive besides; so we said we would *do it*; but," added he with considerable tenderness, a tear gathering in his sunken eye,—
"I thought of *doing it* in the easiest manner, as I have heard tell."

"Where can you purchase some food? for this is the first thing; after that I shall talk with you,"—Sophia said.

"A half mile from this there is a small dealer; but neither of us dare appear in the day-light, for I should be found out." After a moment's pause, he added,—
"I know that you will not inform about me, young lady; I'll die by my own hand, we will all die rather than that I go to prison."

"Half a mile off; and which way? I shall return in a few minutes," cried the ministering angel, without heeding his last remarks.

Sophia made speed and soon returned with a small measure of wine, and a sufficiency of fitting food for the time. She managed too by various means to strike up a brisk fire, round which they all grouped; and for one day at least the wretched and desperate family procrastinated the suicidal deed.

By this time the young lady had begun to fear that her excursion towards Bagshot Heath was not to be entirely barren of interest. She had at any rate ministered to the relief of a family which, but for her, appeared to have been on the brink of a shocking death; and she was now scated along with them within the walls of a ruined tower, whose cheerless walls and aspect, might have entitled her to be taken for a captured princess in the hands of the gipsy or bandit-race. But if such were the aspect which the romantic imagination might have put upon the group and the scene, she was soon to have her interest doubly increased, and with circumstances which wrought in such a manner, that her own history and fate seemed to be thereto deeply attached.

The wretched people having in some degree recovered their natural selves,—confidence gathering strength with their comforts, Sophia felt that she might, without wounding their feelings, inquire a little into their past lives.

"May I ask what is your family name, and whether you belong originally to these parts? and also how it has come that you are so wofully reduced and endangered? In one of you, at least, I think I discover a resemblance to an individual who lately resided in this neighbourhood,"—Miss Maxwell's eye dwelt upon the man,—"after whose welfare I have, before coming to this ruin, been making inquiries, but to no avail,—I mean a person of the name of Dimmock, to whom I paid a visit no great while ago. I have been to the cottage, but it is tenanted and deserted: pray, can you inform me whither they have gone, and where I could see them?"

The man, without at first paying the slightest heed to the question put, instantly cried,—

"Why you are the Miss Maxwell, then, of whom my father and mother were always speaking, ever since you made them the handsome presents! I am sure you are the same before you speak.—I am John Dimmock, their wretched son."

Sophia repressed her eagerness and delight at this most unexpected discovery as well as she could, and repeated her questions relative to the whereabouts of the parents.

"Why, I should have thought," said the man, "that you knew, young lady, of their departure from this Mr. Crawford with whom, I believe, you are not unacquainted, having done all he could, and furnishing them with the means, to get to America. Old people like them to go to America! Curse that fellow, if it had not been for him, I should not have been obliged to fly to this hiding place, nor been without a crust; for somehow or other the old people were never without the means of helping us. It is in my heart to do Crawford a bit of a turn some chance-day, if I live, and if I happen to fall in with him. You may tell him so," added the fellow, supposing Sophia to be on the most familiar and friendly terms with James;—"you may tell him so," repeated the man,—
"I don't care a curse,—I have a grudge, and should like to serve him out. I know a thing or two, and may yet have a fling at the puppy."

In this way John Dimmock talked, almost every sentence strengthening Sophia's conjectures, that she was on the threshold of some notable information. It was not her best course, however, to rush with seeming impatience upon the important secret which appeared to be on the eve of disclosure. It would be more prudent to let it come out by some side hints or in the course of young Dimmock's own story; and therefore as the fellow was becoming communicative, and uncommonly lively, having received a gold piece or two from the prying and resolute girl, together with a promise of further assistance if he would remove himself to some of the obscurities of the Great Metropolis,—she begged that he would favour her with a sketch of his past life, alleging that if he told her the truth it would not only interest her ear, but enable her to judge how best she might assist him.

John Dimmock fancied that he would look somewhat great and gallant in the beautiful Miss Maxwell's estimation, should he take a glance at some passages of his career, varnishing, as he

would do so as well as he could, its revolting points. Accordingly he thus started.

"Some how or another, ma'am, as soon as my old dad had me taken from school, where he kept me for a far longer time than I had a mind myself,—in fact, if the truth must be told,—I ran away for good, from the school, and for a long time from home too,—I thought of the line of life to choose, but never could come to a fix till the cursed magistrates fixed me in the county gaol for poaching, just as if that was a crime. Indeed, for some years I was, I know not how often out and in for the like sport, till I cared little what I did, or what folks said of me."

"Honest industry, and that which feared not the face of man, would have been better," said Sophia, but not without a pang—remembering herself!

"True, young lady," said John: "but somehow I got into a line that I either could not, nor would not, go out of. There is such a thing, ma'am, as destiny; but it is too often through our wilful wickedness, and therefore no hidden power is to be blamed, but our own wicked selves."

Thus spoke John Dimmock, the son of a not unendowed father, and himself capable of good things, Sophia perceived all this, became somewhat interested in the fellow's fortunes and begged him to proceed.

"After being hunted from place to place as a poacher, and prisoned, I say not how often for the same, I resolved to be revenged in a small way and to take my departure for another sphere. Old Sir Thomas Whitworth, my bitterest enemy in these parts, now gone to his account, the old gouty rascal, had a particular favourite walk in his plantations. I knew every step of it; and it was in the very nooks of his plantations where I used to brimstone his pheasants and to snare the hares of his fine preserve. Well! what do I do? I planted a gin of forty-wire power, twisted and darkened as I knew how to do it, to catch a hare, putting it exactly across the path which the old fool trod. He did tread it, tottering as he was,—was caught by the flannelled limb,—arrested as he had often made me to be,—thrown down, the dotard, and his ankle dislocated,—dislocated, and he died thereof—the old rascal died, and no doubt went to hell. Ha! ha! ha!"

"And you like, John Dimmock," said Sophia, "to look back upon these exploits! Would that you had a better retrospect!"—and then she thought of the things suggested by a *retrospect*.

"No, I don't like to look back," answered the fellow,—"but what can I do? Let me go on.—I left Bagshot—cut my stick—and was off to Kent. I knew Jack Romeshill; and he was now a smuggler on the coast. Poaching and smuggling are brethren; so I joined Jack's crew. Glorious fun we had in Kent, but most dangerous."

"Glorious! you call it," said Miss Maxwell, "I think it must have been grievous—what say you, Mrs. Dimmock," addressing the restored woman.

"My name is not Mrs. Dimmock, ma'am, and therefore I don't care to live. He does not make me his wife, my sweet innocent young lady; he will not wed me, and this is helping to kill me!"

Sophia clasped her hands and threw her eyes aloft; Dimmock and the woman thought that all the emotion was about their wickedness:—but it was not!

"It is true, young lady, as Mary there says,"

observed John, "that we are not tied as the church tieth: but I declare the parson could not make her dearer nor nearer to me than she is. Yet, when I drink I am so cruel to her!"

"Yes, ma'am, he is very bad to me when he drinks or when he is out of sorts. He beats and kicks me then," said Mary, weeping.

"Yes! it is all true, Miss Maxwell; I always fly against the woman who is my faithfullest and tenderest friend," said John—and he shed tears of remorse.—"Well, as I was saying," continued he, after a pause, "I went to Kent,—it was there I met my Mary,—the mother of little Mary there; and there too it was that I lived a more desperate life than what this Bagshot here witnessed. We had the vile excise and their assistants to contend with. But I'll tell you how I helped to serve one of them out."

And the fellow laughed outrageously at the incident which we are about to describe.

"Richardson," said John Dimmock, "was the terriblest officer we met with,—strong, and cruel, and never-forgiving. He would hunt you to hell, and through the caverns of perdition, I verily believe. He is the only man that ever made me shudder with horrid oaths. He coins oaths, ma'am, so clever and hearty he is as a blasphemer. Well, ma'am, me and two more of us caught him at fault, that is, unprepared to defend himself or to bother us. We snatched him, we blindfolded him,—we gagged him, so that he could neither speak nor see. It was night,—a dark, blustering night, and we carried him back and forward for hours, swearing what we should do unto him, till we got him into mortal fear. He trembled like an aspen leaf and we danced with glee to feel him trembling. But devil a word could he speak. To torment him the more we said he must be gagged to prevent him from blasphemy."

"Don't you think, John Dimmock, that it was terrible work you were about, and that you must answer for it at the day of judgment?" cried Sophia.

"I am sure you are eight ma'am; although we did not think at the time of our wickedness or of what we were to answer for. When, ma'am, one is in the way of, and on the road to perdition, he does not reason or think like a man, but just as one that is determined to make his doom after the more and the more sure. It was to be, and therefore it must be,—that is my motto."

"What then did you do with the exciseman?" asked Miss Maxwell.

"We took him to the beach,—or rather, as we swore,—to one of the cliffs in the neighbourhood, asseverating that we should toss him over into the boiling ocean beneath; for it was high tide. And now behold him at the brink of the precipice! 'Unloosen his hands,' shouted I, 'and let him have a chance for his life.' His hands were unloosened; and while kicking and struggling most awful, we let him over the edge, gently dropping him till his hands caught the top of the rock, when he laid hold with all the terrors of grim eternity upon him. And there, and then, and thus we left him; his fingers and finger nails dug as far and firm as it was in flesh, blood, and bone to do, into the senseless rock, believing himself suspended over the horrid abyss, and clinging, like one exactly between life and death, by the frail fingers, unable to draw himself up, there to count the most enormous of his numberless sins in the best way he could for meeting God."



"It was monstrous cruelty!" cried Sophia.

"It was horrid cruelty, ma'am, I will admit," said John Dimmock. "But yet how many of us by our own wilful deeds are continually suspending ourselves or others over the terrors of the bottomless pit!" he added, mournfully. "Well, as me and my comrades soon afterwards learned, Richardson found that his fingers and arms could no longer preserve him from the fearful plunge. The tide had retired, and he would have to alight far, far down upon the jagged yawning rocks. He thought of this, and could he have spoken, he would have prayed for the surges of the deep to receive him, rather than the rocky embrace. He dropt!"

"And what became of the wretch?" cried Sophia.

"Became of him!" answered John. "He dropt not beyond ten feet, and was received on the beautiful soft sandy floor, without a broken bone, although heart-broken and almost in the agonies of death from monstrous fear. Having dropt, he relieved his mouth of the gag, and no doubt vomited volumes of oaths and curses against those who had so well served him out."

"I say it was monstrously done," again cried Miss Maxwell. "How can you lay down your head to sleep and not dream of the cruelty? you were in every sense deliberate murderers."

"I cannot deny it," observed John; "but I have been oft and horribly suspended in doubt and fear. At last I got a sickener; I was tired, too, of the smuggler's career;—I came home to my father and mother's cottage, down yonder, and for

some months lived a life of indolence and of reproach from them, because they said I was a burden."

"Then how and when did you again quit their roof?" asked Sophia, as if she thought that John had arrived at the point with which she was to find herself, or some one to whom her destiny seemed to link her, strangely associated.

"I did not finally quit the cottage, till that enemy of mine, James Crawford, in a measure forced and frightened my parents away altogether," said John. "Somehow he stood in fear that they would blab and bring him into ugly trouble. Many was the time that he latterly came out to them, and always with an advice, among other things, that they should turn me out. He feared me somehow; and now he has cause for so doing. I bear him a deadly grudge. However I say I did not finally quit the cottage till the old people deserted it; and till then, when I did go out, it was only in the darkness of night."

"Why always in the night?" asked Sophia, twisting between her fingers another gold piece.

"Because, beautiful and good Miss Maxwell," answered the fellow, "I went out at the fitting time for picking up glittering pieces like to that which you are playing with."

"Then your career was from less to greater danger, John," Sophia observed, putting the piece into the woman's hand.

"Thanks, kind Miss Maxwell!" cried John: "may you never feel the want of the ~~assault~~. I have many a time felt it, and have had to help myself, when there was no one to come to my assistance, or the assistance of these poor creatures. But what are we to think of these people,—those fine gentlemen that take to the road, when there is no necessity or starving temptation to the crime? Ay, what would you say to that, Miss Maxwell?"

"Why, I should say that it was impossible that any such heinous wickedness and folly could stain the present age."

"Hear me, ma'am, and answer me too, if you please," cried the fellow. "Do you remember having read of the robbery of the Honourable Captain Stewart,—he that is the suitor of the lovely sister of Crawford,—one night last summer in the neighbourhood of Hounslow?"

"I think," answered she, "I have some faint recollection of that affair."

"Well then," continued Dimmock, "I was a witness of the same piece of business, as I by chance happened to be behind the hedge on the roadside where the assault and the robbery took place. Two of the highwaymen I knew: one of them an old villain who was lately cast for death at the Old Bailey, but who poisoned himself, as you may remember; and another, not half his age, the very James Crawford of whom it is said you have thought so much. The third and most active of the robbers I never had seen before, and cannot give you any clue to his name or circumstances. However, he was a middle-aged person, and whether in daylight or moonlight he should ever come within reach of my eyes, I should to a certainty be able to point him out."

"All this is very extraordinary," observed Sophia, affecting the least possible surprise, though, in reality profoundly astonished: "but I must think of going towards London; yet cannot start

till for a moment I consider what is to be done for you, poor creatures."

Having considered within herself for a few seconds, she thus again spoke:—

"It appears that you are in danger, should you continue much longer in this dreary place, from the officers of the law, and also that you may in a short time be again tempted to resort to the charcoal, when the brazier being more largely filled and skilfully placed, no current of air or unexpected intruder like me may divert the suffocation. In these circumstances a thought has struck me, that may lead to your salvation here and hereafter. The carriage in which I travelled hitherward to-day, is at the stabling down below. I shall now hasten to the place before it grows quite dark; come you after me as soon as night has set in. I shall wait for you, and then carry you to the suburbs of London where you will be much safer than here. I shall also give you the means of providing comfortably for yourselves somewhere in the metropolis; you, John Dimmock, promising me that you will make Mary here your lawful wife, and also that you will never, tipsy nor sober, lift your hand or foot to her injury."

Mary outcried and John scratched his head, wincing, in some measure under the chastisement of Sophia's kindly reproof, promising as it appeared, however, with a genuine frankness to do and also to refrain as proposed.

"If," said Miss Maxwell, "no other advantage should result from my journey of this day but your well-being and well-doing, I shall be amply repaid for my trouble and expense."

Everything was carried out as proposed, till the party came within the lights of London; and then they separated,—Sophia's last words being,—

"Meet me John Dimmock, at the east end of St. Paul's Churchyard to-morrow evening, precisely at the hour of six; till then, farewell."

John Dimmock promised punctuality; and they parted, Sophia overjoyed at the result of her day's adventures.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The nearer grew the peril imminent,
Stronger became reciprocal reproach.

Old Poem.

LET us now return to Arnold and James Crawford, whom we shall find in earnest discussion with each other in a private room at a West-end hotel.

"That damned and damning letter, James, which the fiend Sophia Maxwell has filched from Dimmock, is our ruin!" exclaimed Arnold suddenly. "Never can I forgive you the heedlessness, the senseless facility with which you have allowed us and our magnificent schemes to be thwarted by a silly girl with whom, like any other lad, you have merely had an amour. Infernal folly!"

"And the clever stratagem of the drugged oranges! How have you bettered the matter by that clumsy and palpable attempt at a cowardly murder?" demanded James. "The latter was bad enough, and all along appeared to me the invention of a person that must already have believed himself involved in desperate circum-

stances instead of being entitled to talk of magnificent schemes and certain success. In truth, instead of abusing me for having carelessly let the document escape my hands, I should charge you with the grossest forgetfulness of your ever-vaulted sagacity, for having penned it at all."

It was thus that Crawford answered his experienced Mentor.

"Stripling!" replied Arnold, "you are quite incapable of fathoming my plans, nor am I to have them criticised by you. All that you had to think of is to attend to my orders, my instructions: now you have ruined us every way."

"All I have had to think of was to attend to your orders and instructions!" exclaimed the young man; "what have I reaped for having once followed your lessons? Dark day was that in which I first listened to you,—that on which you first came within reach of my eye-sight. Ruined every way by me, do you dare to say? It has been ruin to me, and will, I have now a foresight, be direful ruin and destruction to my family, the hour in which I listened to the slightest of your teachings."

There was too much truth in the youth's energetic statement to admit of a reply from the crest-fallen wretch by whom he had been undone; and too little advantage to be gained in any way by prolonging angry recrimination, for Arnold to irritate his pupil further. He therefore, with the dexterity peculiar to him, burst into a loud fit of laughter, declaring that it was only for a moment that he was confounded and put out of humour; was sorry that he had spoken rather sharply to James, but that they were both too hasty; that it would never do to have a house divided in itself; that he now saw how easily they might extricate themselves, and silence the syren, who had been the means of so inveigling them.

"It is, my dear friend," said Arnold, "a subject not incurious in itself, this same girl's history since you were first introduced to the Maxwells," giving a new turn to the discourse, and affecting the metaphysician. "At first you found her a spoilt, inexperienced, unthinking, and amorous girl. Now she is an acute, sensible, strong-minded, and resolute woman,—as beautiful as ever, but a perfect devil,—malignant, rancorous, fertile in resources, and having the perseverance of the most resolute and devoted, even when the end to be obtained is some mighty triumph in the fate of empire. How, James, can you account for the sudden transformation?"

But James was not yet in a humour to philosophise about such a subtle theme, bearing in mind certain of Arnold's harsh charges, and also not forgetful of the perilous condition to which he and his tutor had brought themselves. He therefore only replied to the above speculation of the arch-impostor words to this effect:—

"All that we have experienced as yet from Sophia Maxwell's vengeful spirit is, I fear and verily believe, but a sample and the beginning of her persecution."

"Nonsense! James," cried Arnold; "we two are surely not long to be foiled even by such a vixen. And yet she seems to be a most persevering enemy, as I have already said. Strange that she does not at once do her worst!"

"Ah! there it is," cried Crawford; "and I can only explain her hate and unceasing pursuit of us, without coming to a final effort at public exposure of what she knows and what she suspects of our ways, in this manner:—she has a twofold principle of action. First, the fear of her amour and illicit intimacy with me being made known, is equal to her spirit of vindictiveness;—so evenly balanced indeed are the two things that, as she herself has asseverated to me, if I spare her, she will spare me."

"But why then does she not cease her damnable provocation, remaining at home, or busying herself somewhere else?" asked Arnold, not fully satisfied with the explanation; adding these words, however, with some degree of hopeful expression: "You do not think, then, that if we refrain from making an exposure of her *faux-pas*, that she will venture to divulge the nature of our affairs?"

"No; she will not rashly denounce us to the world, or volunteer to witness against us, at least till she has accumulated other and still more terrible proofs to our deep damnation; for then I would not have any longer hope. Indeed if you persevere in filling her hands with such tangible proofs of a conspiracy against her life, as has been done, I cannot say how speedily she may be goaded to the last act of revenge."

Arnold winced, and James proceeded:—

"I was in hopes that her shame by this time would have proclaimed itself, but am now convinced to the contrary."

"Has she been dragging herself, do you conjecture, Crawford?" inquired the arch-impostor.

"I should think not," answered the other, "although I believe she would stop at nothing, rather than have the world or her father to know that she was no longer the innocent and pure girl that she was when first I met her. I have had too many times of late been confronted by her, not to observe that her shape and her complexion are as perfectly maidenly in appearance as ever they were. But as to the other principle, or motive, of her vindictive perseverance, of which I spoke——"

"Yes: you talked of a two-fold reason," observed Arnold.

"I did," said Crawford; "and this is the second, be you assured. Her pride has been terribly aroused by my treatment of her, and the discovery of certain points in our affairs,—so terribly aroused, in fact, as to awaken every latent energy in her nature. Having obtained a certain clue, by means of which she has been enabled to trace our course further and further whenever she set her mind upon the pursuit, she has at length got a successful curiosity to take the place of what was her all in all a little time ago: the amorous passion has yielded to the prying passion; she has need in the desolation of her hopes and desires in one engrossing way, to have activity and satisfaction in another,—that other being extremely agreeable to the female heart. To pry into our history and the characters of each one of our friends is quite a romantic occupation for the fiend, nor have we got to the end of her discoveries. When she finds that no more can be gathered, nothing else divulged, then down she will come upon us with

all the fell and accumulated vengeance of the insulted and injured woman."

The conclusion at which the naturally clear-sighted and intelligent James Crawford had arrived, was any thing but consolatory. It was only to the intent of having the evil day put indefinitely off, sooner or later to have them arrested in their infamous career with the suddenness of the thunder-bolt, crushing them and flinging them to endless perdition.

"It was a good thing," said Arnold, after a pause, "that we got rid of those infernal Dimmocks—I mean that they consented so readily to leave the country."

"Yes," returned Crawford; "and heaven send that they may not take it into their heads to come back. Old Dimmock considers himself to have been cheated out of a fair share of the plunder got from the public; but he has still had some decent sums—and this last which we gave him as an inducement to depart with his old wife, was no small drain on us. Well—they are gone, at all events for the present; and this is at least a subject for congratulation, amongst all our fears and annoyances. By the way, did I mention to you that a few nights ago, when I returned home, I heard that you had called and also Mr. Hunter; and that on the same evening, and at the same hour too, a young lady had likewise called, who, by the description given by my hall-porter, I feel convinced was that fiend Sophia."

"No, you did not mention the circumstance," said Arnold, fixing a penetrating glance upon his companion, as if to read the secrets of his inmost soul,—then withdrawing his eyes, apparently satisfied with the result of his scrutiny.

"If it were Sophia," added Crawford, who had not noticed the manner in which Arnold had looked at him, "she now seems resolved to ferret me out even in my own dwelling. But perhaps I am mistaken, and it was some one else."

"Most likely," observed Arnold drily.

The two friends then separated.

CHAPTER XL.

Confront this man, and, if ye dare, deny
His testimony to your deep black guilt!

Old Poem.

WE now return to Sophia Maxwell—the object of such alarm and hatred on the part of the impostors.

Having brought old Dimmock's son, with the child and its mother, from Bagshot to London, Sophia had arranged an appointment, as the reader will remember, with these poor people, to take place in St. Paul's Churchyard, on the following evening; and both parties were punctual, the man and the woman evincing a lively sense of gratitude, and really considerably improved to the eye by the sound night's rest which they had enjoyed in a comfortable bed, by the sufficiency of nourishment of which they had partaken in the course of the succeeding day, and by the hope of having a settled decent manner of life set before them.

Sophia was glad to see the poor people, and spoke of their altered looks with approval and encouragement.

"Oh! good and sweet lady," cried John Dimmock, "it seems so easy to look decent and to do right, when one is once in the straight way, that surely I shall never go astray again. I know the bitterness as well as the temptations of the past. The whole is like a horrid dream from which I am just awakening; and I trust that I shall never exchange the comforts of this day's honest and virtuous resolves for the riot and the ruin of wild adventure."

"Be strong in your resolutions, and attend to my interest in you, and a considerable share of happiness and respectability may yet be yours. Meanwhile follow me," said Sophia.

She bent her steps towards Smithfield, and having next entered Cloth Fair, conducted them through a narrow passage to a neat and ready-furnished apartment, the rent for the week having previously been paid by her, and the proper arrangements entered into for securing ordinary comforts for persons in humble circumstances. Tidy clothing was soon provided also for the three; and then she left them, saying that her visits would be frequent, so long as she found they were deserving of her kindness. Tears were all that the poor people could show in testimony of their gratitude as the lovely young lady quitted the room.

"We shall visit the parson without delay, my dear," said Dimmock, "and have that done which should have been seen to before I enticed you from your excellent father's roof. But better late than never, thanks be to that angel, in whose heart God has put it to come to our great relief."

We should avail ourselves of an opportunity to observe that Mr. Maxwell's affairs and business in every way assumed a prosperous complexion. He began to trade cautiously but somewhat extensively, as soon as a final settlement of his embarrassments with his creditors could be obtained,—quitting the hotel where he had been domiciled from the time of his acquittal at the Old Bailey Sessions, and hiring a private house of moderate pretensions in the vicinity of Finsbury Square, whither Sophia immediately went, to be his home-loving child, his companion, his house-keeper.

Nevertheless, with the due performance of her domestic duties, Sophia never for once—now that she was so deep into the pursuits—contemplated giving up her prying and persecution, to the confusion and humiliation of Crawford and his colleague. She with the eagerness of female curiosity and the wronged heart's rancour, beheld with a sort of triumphant rejoicing how successfully she might employ young Dimmock; and while charitably resolving on doing all in her power for the renovation of his character and condition, she was also determined that he should be made to aid her in her efforts to bring the impostors to a most signal and infamous end.

Having made some trial of Dimmock's conduct and character, now a married citizen, and persuaded in the course of her clear insight, that he was susceptible of being made a good member of society, she had him first of all installed in her father's warehouse as porter and errand man, Mr. Maxwell by this time trading in the wine business.

Now, it was not uncleverly managed on the part of Sophia, that she, amongst the first of Dimmock's new duties as a porter contrived that samples of various liquors should be sent to Conduit Street,—Crawford and his colleague, as she was very well aware, being still carrying on their nefarious imposture, with flying colours.

Dimmock hired him with his hamper to Crawford's, previously put on his guard and requested to speak out as circumstances might suggest, but only to utter the truth.

"Go westward at once, and catch the fellow at breakfast; I shall not be far in the rear of you," was the order of Sophia.

Crawford received the porter with his ample hamper graciously enough, but would hardly have deigned to inquire whence it came, habituated as he had become to presents of the kind, made by interested people in business. Something, however, in the face and figure of the porter, notwithstanding his altered garb, struck James; for after a scrutinizing look or two, he, with some degree of flattery, said, "I think I have met with you before; am I in error?"

"No, not a particle away from the truth on this occasion, at least; I myself would recognise you, in spite of every disguise, although in a crowd of ten thousand. My name is Dimmock,—the son of old *Fitzgerald*—I should rather say of the enormously wealthy miser whose property you are to inherit—late a lodger too in these handsome apartments."

James was greatly troubled, but managed to recover his presence of mind to ask, "Who is the party that has thought of inviting me to make a trial of his sample bottles?"

"Mr. Maxwell, the wine-merchant, sir, in Great St. Helen's; I am his porter, and one of the managers is close at hand, I believe, in order to talk more particularly about the business."

Hardly had he finished the sentence, when a servant announced to James that a lady wished to have a word with him,—the lady, Sophia Maxwell herself, being at the valet's back.

"Mr. Crawford," said the bold girl, "I will not detain you for any length of time. I have only two questions to put, and but one to you. Will you accept of the samples in the hamper in the lobby, the wine being from my father's warehouse?"

"No; I do not require them,—I do not accept of them," was James's answer; but it was evident he did not well know what to say, or what he really had uttered.

"In that case," said the young lady, turning to the porter, "you will take them back, Dimmock; we do not wish, according to my father's principles of business, to force our goods upon any man. But now for my second query; and you, Dimmock, must let me be answered by you."

"Certainly, ma'am, to the best of my knowledge. I shall speak to whatever you put to me," said the carrier of the hamper.

"Were you a witness, Dimmock, of the robbery of the Hon. Captain Stewart on the Hounslow road last summer? and was this fellow Crawford one of the highwaymen that perpetrated the capital crime?"

Such was the question put to Dimmock, and to which he returned these stunning words:—

"I was an unseen witness of the assault and robbery; and this same James Crawford, I am ready at any time to swear, was one of the fellows who perpetrated the capital crime!"

"Good morning, Crawford," said Miss Maxwell: "I trouble you no further at this juncture;" and down stairs and out to the busy street, she and the wine-carrier sped.

The young man whom they left in utter amazement, hardened as he had rapidly become in crime and imposition, threw himself upon the sofa, where he had a few minutes before been loungingly reading some romance or other, and luxuriously sipping his coffee,—succeeding in a certain measure to banish anxiety from his brain and to dwell composedly in the mists of the false hope that he was continually invoking. He threw himself upon the sofa, and for the first time of his life, if the puling cry of infancy be excepted, gave way to a long fit of uncontrollable weeping,—at times cursing his folly and his fate,—the hour in which he was born, and the day that Arnold had first spoken to him.

"Undone beyond redemption!—only spared to fill the cup more than brimful, and then, to a certainty to die the death of a felon, unpitied, yet a pitiable spectacle!" were utterances among his woeful ejaculatory exclamings.

He bethought him of the pistol, or the dagger's services—of the poisonous drug and the water's depths!

"To this, or worse, it must come; never more shall I taste peace or joy,—never more on earth—on earth!" cried he: "then what in eternity?"

The tension of his brain was too tight to endure; he flew to the bottle to loosen the cords. Deep, deep he drank of the brandy, and in the oblivion of intoxication he took a long and troubled sleep. Would all the wealth fabled of the miser Fitzgerald have outweighed the agonies of the young man,—agonies which tortured him for that hour of passionate weeping which he had gone through ere drowning his senses in the fumes of strong drink?

But to our story.

Sophia had succeeded so well with her wine samples in Conduit Street, that she was resolute on making the experiment with Arnold, and, as a preliminary step—though it may appear a strange one to the reader—she wrote to Sir George Mornay in the following manner:—

"Miss Maxwell presents her compliments to Sir George Mornay, and begs to inform him that she still busies herself in her dear father's affairs. However, for the present she does not wish to trouble Sir George about the wine account so long standing in her father's books against him; nor does she at present recur to the scene in which he acted towards Miss Maxwell in such an unusual manner at Mr. Crawford's in Conduit Street. All at the existing juncture that she requests is, that Sir George, from the strong presumption that she entertains of his certain and positive knowledge of the resorts and habits of Mr. Arnold,—Crawford's colleague in sundry magnificent schemes,—will be kind enough to advertise the said Mr. Arnold, that she will be in waiting for him at the eastern end of St. Paul's Cathedral on the second evening from the date of this note, precisely at eight o'clock. She has merely to add that if Mr. Arnold does not meet her then and there, she will before another day's sun goes down, take such measures as will assuredly bring them face to face."

Such was the nature of Sophia's communication to Sir George Mornay, addressed to Portland Place. And was it not a little singular, for a female of such a prying and meddling curiosity, that although there seemed to be matters of importance depending upon the punctual attendance of Arnold, yet that she displayed little fear of his disappointing her?

The hour came round on the named evening, according to Sophia's note to Sir George Mornay, and at the appointed spot she stood, when St. Paul's struck eight,—Dimmock, her father's porter, hard by. And who is he who paces the pavement within the pillars, cloak-muffled, and gloomy to look upon, as Miss Maxwell takes her position? It is none other but the miscreant Arnold. And what if the desperado carry under the folds of his ample mantle a deadly steel!

Yet Sophia does not fear,—she is strong in faith, feeling that both of them are born to further interviews!

"Is it Mr. Arnold, the colleague of James Crawford, that I address myself to?" asked the intrepid girl, as the muffled personage a second time paced past her.

"You know well—too well, who I am," responded the individual in a tone indicative of concentrated rage.

"You are punctual, as I made sure you would be," observed the lady; "it would have been awkward for me had you kept me long waiting for you, in a keen winter night like this."

"I seldom am behind, madam, when a young lady proposes the assignation," the individual answered sneeringly.

"The period of our interview at the present will be brief, however peremptory the summons, which I, a woman, issued. The point to be decided is one of moment to you, but of no immediate urgency, unless it be to satisfy my curiosity,—a woman's eagerness to make discovery. Follow me," she added, "to yonder lamp."

The muffled figure obeyed with a child-like docility, and stepped to the lamp-post at which Dimmock had a little before been planted.

"Arnold," cried Sophia, "look me directly in the face, but fear no instant danger from me. I say nothing now of the letter counselling to send me to an unawaking sleep, or of the drugged fruit; but I demand of this man here, Dimmock, my father's porter and errand-goer, if he has ever looked upon you ere this,—and if so, where and when?"

"The first and only time," exclaimed John Dimmock, "that I ever before set eyes upon that man, 'was when I, unseen, witnessed the assault made upon the Hon. Captain Stewart, near Hounslow. There were three highwaymen; two of them I had some knowledge of before; the third and most active of them was a stranger to me. This is the man, and that I am ready to give oath to at any time when required."

"Good night, Mr. Arnold," whispered Sophia, with a few other words which escaped Dimmock's ear.

He only heard, as he frequently, long afterwards, related, thanks expressed by Miss Maxwell, which she begged might be forwarded to Sir George Mornay, on account of the prompti-

tude with which he had communicated her request for an interview with his friend.

One might think that the merchant's daughter had by this time got deeply enough acquainted with the flagitious career of the impostors. Still, she was not yet satisfied: she felt there was at least one other acquaintanceship to form,—one of a highly honourable nature, but still one that would erect most powerfully and on sure foundations, a tower of terror and a final mastery over the impostors. Leaving her to cogitate for a time this new idea, let us accompany Arnold to his retreat, and see if we can make any discovery of his state of mind on finding there was in existence a most willing witness of one of his most criminal and punishable perpetrations,—a witness too at the beck and in the employ of his most subtle and implacable enemy!

Arnold on returning westward from the interview in St. Paul's Churchyard, more astounded and alarmed, perhaps, than he had ever been by any menacing evil,—staggering, not from the poison of the cup, but the blows that reached even the citadel of his hellish thoughts, dealt as these were by such apparently inadequate hands,—had at first bethought him of paying a visit to Crawford,—the arch-villain, adept and obdurate-souled as he was, being still assailable and frail when the terrors of death took hold of him. The tutor of villainies would now have taken shelter in the sympathies and counsels of his apt pupil. The dread, however, lest Sophia Maxwell might suddenly make herself a party at Conduit Street, even at that hour of the wintry season, withheld him.

"She possesses," he immediately said, "the ubiquity of the devil; and it seems besides that neither doors nor walls can shut her out from our counsels and acts."

So he posted in the quickest way he could towards the hotel where he at times resided, throwing behind him many a furtive glance, absolutely in terror at times of his own shadow.

Let imagination accompany that bad man to his private chamber,—to his pillow, and follow him, if ye can, throughout the long winter night, during which sleep did not once visit his eye-lids, nor repose come near to his perturbed thoughts. How many were the trains of reflection,—how numerous the memories, coming back in the dreariness of the hours with a terrible freshness, such as he had never felt since his first plunges into crime,—how appallingly retributive his visions!

"Ha!" cried he, plunging himself almost headlong from his bed upon the floor, "what spectre is that? Is it the injured spirit of the maiden I first ruined,—of some one of the countless victims of my art?—of the assassinated in cold blood, or the murdered in my highway assaults? Emily Crawford, what are the visitations which I am to receive for my perjuries to thee,—and what the impending conflict when thy brother James hath been hurled to the depths of despair and stung to madness by the full discovery of me?"

In this way did the miscreant now and then start from a bed that was worse than fiery hot for him,—his brain inflamed and his visual organs bloodshot,—believing in the spectres of his own creation, but still unswayed or softened by one genial sentiment of repentance. He, for the time,

believed and trembled, but not with an ameliorating faith or a godly fear,—it was only as the habitants of hell do!

Daylight arrived, driving from the brain portions of the spectral thoughts which had whelmed in the soul of the villain. He hastened to the open air,—he sought the busy and deafening haunts of man. His nature recovered some amount of its habitual hardihood; and now he thought that it would be as well to invite the society of his apt pupil,—appointing an obscure public-house in an obscure corner for the place of meeting.

Crawford was punctual,—he was elated; for he had, ever since he was confronted by Sophia and Dimmock, found oblivion or solace in the cup.

"Ha! my friend Arnold," cried he, "I rejoice to meet you; but why so long a stranger? Now however, let us be glad,—banish care for an hour,—why make ourselves cursedly unhappy? what shall we drink?"

Upon this the young man pulled the string of the bell of the obscure tavern, not unchecked by the elder *worthy*; for although Arnold could perceive that James was partially already in his cups, and although he was too cool and calculating a villain to allow strong drink oft to master him, he yet needed a stimulus and something that promised to cheer, after the exhaustion of the past night, and the still breeding gloom of his spirit.

They at once applied themselves with considerable freedom to the bottle, before even entering closely upon the subjects which were after all nearest to their thoughts, tearing them to pieces as with infernal fangs. James, having been about half-seas over when they first met, soon grew almost uproariously gleesome, chanting smatches of luscious songs, and rioting amid the sort of lurid images of grandeur which his wine-excited fancies beheld around him. Nor did Arnold escape the contagion, enlivened by the cup, and fondly taking shelter in such conglomerations as enveloped them—conjured up by their own peculiar natures, inebriated as they were.

"Arnold, my friend," cried Crawford, "I see a way of extricating ourselves entirely from the meshes of the net which the fiendish Sophia has been spreading for us. I shall make her my wife, if not by fair, at least by foul means. I shall not allow her to be the intruder upon either of us, but assume a proper *effrontery*, and pounce upon her in her father's presence, if need be. I shall make proposals there and then; and if she offers to blab, I shall take the first word and tell her to her face, ay, and in hearing of the merchant himself, that her tale is as worthless as her pretended chastity and virtue. I will!"—and he swore deeply that he would do the magnanimous and the ruffian-like.

"Go on," said Arnold, half transported in his obviousness and the giddings of the ecstatic Crawford. "I in a measure am pleased with your resolute scheme so far; but proceed."

"Why, if I should happen to break down from any unforeseen circumstance, before I can come to the broad and bold denunciation of her character; or should she shut my mouth, or repel my presence and suit altogether, ere I can get to the

merchant's ear,—why, then, we must lose no time, constantly as she is parading about, nightly as well as daily, in employing some bold agents who shall carry her to one of those accommodating lodging-houses with which I am familiar, and there having bedded her if not wedded her, send the fiend adrift in the morning, to steer her way the best way she can to her papa's fireside. Let her tell any story she chooses after that; we have plentiful knowledge of her to give another colouring to the whole, should she survive the indignities offered her,—my thought being that the last resort now mentioned would be a sure method of depriving her of reason, half-crazed as she already is, or perhaps killing her outright."

Into these desperate views the now intoxicated Arnold entered so far that he went to his dwelling-place in a state to take a sound sleep; nor, until further consideration did he mean to disclose the particulars of his interview with the young lady in St. Paul's Churchyard. Even Crawford, on his side, although much more communicative, with regard to many ticklish points, evaded the account of the wine-sample stratagem,—being not forgetful of young Dimmock's introduction into the drama, and of his cordial readiness to come forward about the highway-robbery of Captain Stewart. This was such an alarming and formidable point that it did not entirely pass unnoticed,—James merely saying, thinking that he communicated a piece of not unimportant news:—

"I learn that our old colleague's son, young Dimmock, base dog! is actually in the service of Mr. Maxwell,—in the pay, you may be sure, of the vindictive daughter."

"The devil he is!" exclaimed Arnold; "hell to them both!"

Upon this the villains parted, tolerably comfortable for that time.

Miss Maxwell was neither idle in respect of her plans nor her actual doings, while the infamous impostors were torn by the most horrid apprehensions, or were with racked brains labouring to devise some *precious* scheme whereby to thwart her purposes, and to escape their fate. Her grand anxiety now was to get introduced to the Hon. Captain Stewart; and the very first movement she made in that direction promised, at no distant date, to have the result she so much longed for. She purchased an old newspaper in which was given a very particular account of the highway robbery of that gentleman, perpetrated by three villains, and this she took an opportunity to read to her father, as if she had merely, unlooked for, fallen in with a striking anecdote or incident of which she had never heard before.

Having finished the reading, her father, after a slight stirring of his recollections, said, rather surprisedly, "My dear child, the same Captain Stewart must be son of the same talkative Lord Fanmore, who has been a good customer of mine, and who may be again. He keeps a noble table and has more than once given me a most handsome order for wines. You know what a splendid consignment has lately come to hand; and I shall write to him, inviting a trial."

"Do, father," cried Sophia; "who knows but his son, the Captain, may be enticed to recommend a few pipes for the mess of his regiment? I should like very much to see the gallant officer,

who, by the way, is now Lord Fanmore's heir."

Mr. Maxwell was prompt in performing whatever was of a business nature, or had a chance to lead to a profitable transaction. Accordingly he wrote to the captain's noble father, in the politest terms, inquiring if he would allow him to present a few samples of certain wines which had recently been forwarded to his vaults, or were in the Docks; being of the rarest quality, the most esteemed vintages, and some of them in the highest state of perfection as respected age.

Lord Fanmore immediately returned for answer, that Mr. Maxwell need not put himself to the trouble of sending him samples, but, as he was about to add to his stock very considerably, he would order a good judge to call upon Mr. Maxwell, in order to taste the wines and to make the necessary arrangements connected with a purchase.

"My son, the Hon. Captain Stewart," said the peer, giving all the Christian names, which we purposely omit, "although no wine-bibber, has a most excellent and delicate perception of the qualities and flavours of the juice of the grape: he will tell you, after tasting rapidly in turn a dozen of different clarets, which is the one he prefers, and the reasons for his preference. Therefore look to it, Mr. Maxwell, and put your best to the test."

The merchant was overjoyed at the result of his note to his lordship; but if he was uplifted, what were his lovely daughter's ecstasies, intent, to a morbid and extraordinary degree, to ferret out every particle of fact and of evidence that bore upon the villainies of Crawford and his colleague in imposture! What added to the delightful nature of his lordship's answer was, that with his wonted finical attention to whatever appeared to him to exhibit his dignity, he not only named the day but the very hour of the day, when his son would wait upon the merchant.

"I shall be in the counting-house with you at the moment," said Sophia: "I should like very much to have the sight of a gentleman who has encountered highwaymen. What! father, if we should invite the captain to dinner, that he might have the greater leisure and the best opportunity to judge of the wines?"

"Excellently thought," cried the merchant; "do you pen a pretty note in your own name, and as my child, to his lordship, humbly soliciting the honour of Captain Stewart's company to dinner on the day of his intended visit, intimating that it will be the best way in which he can test and taste my wines."

Sophia was neither slow nor unhappy in despatching the note, to which a speedy answer was returned by the captain himself that with great pleasure he should dine with Mr. Maxwell on the day named. The fitting preparations were accordingly made by the merchant's lovely house-keeper and child, while all was tiptoe expectation on her part. Even John Dimmock was dressed up for the occasion, so as to make a fitting appearance in the lobby.

Return we for a short space to Conduit Street, where, in the forenoon of the day immediately succeeding that in which Arnold and Crawford met at the obscure public-house. The colleagues had a long sitting, still in utter perplexity which

way to turn themselves so as to get rid of Miss Maxwell's persecutions, or so to forward their nefarious schemes of imposture as to be enabled to fly from England laden with spoils before she came down upon them with all her fell vengeance. This latter idea seemed to take best; for, after the exaltation and the bravery which strong drink had created were allowed to give place to reflection, and the ordinary reaction of the nervous system, Crawford's browbeating scheme appeared extremely hazardous.

"Let us," said Arnold, "driven now as we are"—he might have added,—*into a corner and to desperation*,—"strain every nerve in bringing our grand scheme to such a pitch of perfection,—to such a degree of fruitfulness—to such a climax, in short, as will enable us to make off with flying colours, and defy persecution of every kind, and even in the puritanical world's estimation to be regarded with such a wonder as will render us the object rather of admiration than of execration. Had it been in Sparta of old and in classic ages, success in such a magnificent undertaking would have brought crowning honours to us, and our names would have been handed down to posterity as those of men of genius and of splendid adventure."

In this self-deluding and verbose manner did the arch-impostor talk,—feeling, it is to be presumed, in the multiplicity of his phrases, and in the length of time he dwelt upon one idea—into which he had schooled his hardened and unprincipled heart,—a sort of realisation of the results which he had most fondly contemplated at the beginning of the scheme; and also believing that he was still dazzling the eyes of his apt scholar, so as to have him to dash further into the enterprise, head and hand.

James, however, although still most anxious for the fulness of the harvest which they had hoped at first to reap, and which, indeed, had hitherto yielded such abundant fruits, could not but foresee that Sophia Maxwell would still continue to harass them, and this with an ever-increasing and more ingenious spirit for giving torment; nay, that perhaps, from her unaccountable familiarity with all their doings, she might take it into her head to thwart the very first attempt they might make to strike more boldly than ever into the field of their speculation, fraught as it naturally was with many dangers. To all this, however, Arnold had something to reply, that helped to allay the anxieties of his pupil.

"Well, but, James," said the miscreant, "it will be as bad and perilous for us to stand stone-still, as to dash daringly forward; back we cannot possibly go:—and as to that vile fiend who is eternally crossing our paths, we must endeavour for the short time that we shall now require,—according to my best calculations,—for carrying out to the full our glorious scheme,—to school ourselves to a thorough disregard of all her devilry,—trusting that she will for a sufficiently lengthened period to serve our purposes, keep aloof from inflicting the last stroke of vengeance."

"If," answered Crawford, "I could thoroughly persuade myself that the damnable vixen would still regard the exposure of her own shame with a dread equal to her desire of harassing and



ruining us, I would rest nearly at peace, relying upon the strongly competing and parallel motives."

"Let us so rely, my friend," cried Arnold, "and perhaps she may spare us for a few days from even the slightest annoyance. During this space, to use a homely proverb, we must work—*making hay when the sun shines*. So up and to it, my dear boy."

Yes, up and to it, James Crawford; for a note is presented by your valet, addressed to your care, but mainly intended for the perusal of your experienced instructor.

It is in these terms:—

"James Crawford, you will be so good as to request your colleague, Arnold, to go directly to his acquaintance, Sir George Mornay, telling the baronet that he must send me by Arnold himself, the sum so long due to my father for

wine. Let the place of payment be in St. Paul's Churchyard, as before, and the time to-morrow night precisely at eight o'clock. It may be some consolation to you that I mean not to meet Arnold myself, but shall send our servant, John Dimmock, to receive the money; for I do not mean much otherwise to run the risk of orange or pistol practice.

"SOPHIA MAXWELL."

"The furnace of hell to the demon!" cried Arnold.

"She will not allow us one moment's peace, you see!" exclaimed Crawford; and again the pair were for a time utterly confounded.

Having kept staring at one another, at least a good half hour,—speechless and unknowing what to say,—Arnold first broke silence.

"After all, however, James," said he, "we are not in a worse position than we were before that cursed note reached us, excepting that it proves

more and more clearly how intimate the fiend is with our relations in regard to other individuals. As to Sir George Mornay, I dare say the payment of the wine will be no great inconvenience. Let us therefore resume our spirits and our utmost activity as determined upon an hour ago."

"But I do not at all like the idea of your going with the money to the appointed spot," said Crawford; "especially as you are to meet that fellow Dimmock, whose recollections are so fresh, and whose services would be so willingly lent, relative to the affair with Captain Stewart,—so willingly lent, I mean, at the nod of Sophia. Cannot Sir George be his own paymaster? and why trouble you, Mr. Arnold?"

"But, James, the despotic woman decides the other way; and I fear that we dare not depart in the slightest from her arrangement and dictation. Therefore I shall go with the money myself. Besides, does not a thought arise within you? May not such a fellow as Dimmock be worked upon? I shall offer him temptations that he is not likely to resist; and then, if he comes to our terms, think of what a plot may be contrived for the riddance of the fiend."

"Good!" cried the apt pupil; "stick at no promise or terms; and now for our bold strokes. If but one of those we talked of the other day should succeed, we might afford to reward Dimmock greatly beyond the fellow's fondest dreams or largest wishes."

Having thus once more consoled themselves and alluded to fresh villainies, the infamous pair set about their occupations with unusual zeal and enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XLI.

Dare she presume to scorn us in this manner?
SHARPEARS.

It was Miss Maxwell who seemed to proceed with flying colours,—not the pair of impostors.

In the course of this and the succeeding chapters, however, we shall come to events which will enable the reader more fully to judge which of the parties—the tormentor or the tormented—had the best reason to congratulate themselves on their fate and actual condition.

Arnold was in St. Paul's Churchyard with the money due by Sir George Mornay for the wine about which we have already heard a good deal, at the appointed hour; and John Dimmock was also as punctually at the same place, as had been named in Sophia's note.

"Well, my friend, Mr. Dimmock," said Arnold, throwing into his speech, accents, and manner, as much of the coaxing and insidious as he was master of,—and this was not a little,—"I find that you are like your mistress, Mr. Maxwell's beautiful and accomplished daughter, a person of business,—you are so precisely punctual in the observance of appointments."

"I must pay you a similar compliment, Mr. Arnold," said John; "for I find you are here to the very minute, as named to me by Miss Maxwell. Indeed she said to me, that I was as sure to find you at this place at the precise hour and moment of that hour, as a man would be did his

life depend upon the mere circumstance of exact time-keeping. She said, 'Mr. Arnold will be as nice in the matter, as a chronometer, by means of which mariners tell to a wonderful degree of accuracy where they are at any time upon the trackless ocean.' You understand me about this same idea of life's dependance."

Arnold did not much relish the sort of sarcasm about life's dependance upon the punctual observance; but he had to conceal in the best way he could the annoyance and turn it to the best account in his power. Accordingly he adroitly answered,—"Oh! yes, I fully understand, you Mr. Dimmock, and was just on the point of broaching the subject myself, had you not cleverly brought it forward. You know, my friend, that we all have had our wild oats to sow;"—John thought within himself that Arnold must have been rather late in sowing the last of his wild oats:—"but what you refer to is past. Crawford and I now pursue a much more sure and profitable game, and should be happy—very happy indeed, to have an active, clever, and intelligent partner, like yourself, Mr. Dimmock, to help us, and to share in the grand harvest. Will you accompany me to some coffee-house in the neighbourhood, and we shall talk over the matter? Your father was getting too old, and was too careless, for our purpose; but we shall never forget the old gentleman."

Thus saying, the two proceeded to have a deliberate and leisurely conversation on the subject which Arnold had just mooted; John manifesting an alacrity of manner, and a gleesome reception of the proposition, which were delightfully inspiring to the arch-impostor.

Let us here pause, and ask ourselves, in what way should we have judged of Dimmock, at this epoch in his history, according to the knowledge obtained of him in the foregoing pages, and according to the lights of that knowledge alone?

We have already seen that John was the son of unprincipled parents,—of a father and mother that had never scrupled, since he could note any thing, to associate themselves with the desperate, even with robbers and highwaymen. We have also seen that his own career, down at least to the period when Miss Maxwell first fell in with him, pursued no other than a vagabond life, too often bordering on, or identical with, that of the worst of characters who might occasionally hide themselves at his father's.

On the other hand, the man was not destitute of good natural parts, speaking merely of intelligence, nor of a fair school education; although, as is too well known, these circumstances are by no means always a sufficient guarantee against profligacy and heinous crimes,—even those of violence and bloodshed. However, upon the whole, it is right to yield very considerable credence in favour of intellectual light and culture, of which, as already said, young Dimmock was not destitute.

But again, unless he had become utterly depraved,—totally divested of moral resolution, and insensible to extraordinary kindness and sympathy on the part of a lovely and highly interesting young lady,—unless he had in a moment become altogether oblivious of his recently most improved condition, and that of those dearest to him,—un-

less he was wholly deaf to the pleasing responses of conscience, it was hardly possible that any bribe offered by the wicked and for manifestly wicked purposes, could be received with favour.

John Dimmock had not only openly professed and exhibited amendment of heart, but had proved it by weeks of becoming conduct. He had lost no time in making the mother of his daughter his legitimate wife; his conduct towards the poor woman had changed from that of the occasional brute and ruffian, to that of the affectionate and tender husband. His house exhibited the comforts which virtuous industry never fails to show forth; and altogether he had so borne himself, ever since coming to reside regularly in the metropolis, as correctly as the observant and clever Miss Maxwell could wish.

Then she would happen with a hearty approval to say to John, "You must be happy now to a degree you never before had a conception of,—happy in your own conscience, and happy to see comfort, peace, plenty, and honesty around you." He would, with every apparent mark of sincerity, answer, "I would not exchange,—thanks to you under God, Miss Maxwell,—my present condition for that of all that has been, or is now, contemplated by Arnold and Crawford, through their daring and matchless imposture."

With all the knowledge and observation of these appearances, evidences, and expressions, on the part of Sophia, was it rash in her to put the implicit trust in her servant, John Dimmock, which necessarily accompanied or prompted the employment of him as agent between her and the impostors? We think it was not so hazardous a faith as some might at first view it. We think there is in human nature foundations for such trustfulness in the reformed, and also that there are observers whose vision, reaching even to the inward motives and principles, is so clear and sure, that it is next to impossible to deceive them, provided they have opportunities, numerous and favourable, for exercising their penetration.

Sophia Maxwell did repose the confident and clear-eyed trust in Dimmock that we have mentioned; so that, immediately prior to his setting off to meet Arnold in the Churchyard, after possessing him with the nature of the business upon which he was sent, she thus talked to, and thus instructed him:—"John, in all probability, the villain Arnold,—who is capable of any enormity,—who hath counselled my death,—and who has actually with his own hand attempted to rob me murderously of my poor life,—will offer you mighty temptations to go over to his and to Crawford's interest,—will hold out the promise, ay, the actual reality, of vast sums of money, to gain you to themselves, and to turn against me, of whom they stand in such mortal fear, as well they may. Arnold, I feel perfectly convinced, will this evening give you greatly more than I ever can, should you be willing to take the bribe, in order to get me for ever out of the way."

"What do you mean, Miss Maxwell,—my benefactress—my saviour!—offer me bribes in order that I may murder you?" and the poor man wept. "Surely, Miss Maxwell, you cannot think that I would be the monster—the—the—I cannot find words to express the proper terms,—to do such a terrible thing!"

He wept again, and louder still,—it was the weeping of a strong man, and most sorrowful to witness: but he resumed—

"Dismiss me from your service this instant, if you harbour the slightest suspicion of me, dear benefactress; forgive me for the freedom; but my heart at this moment," sobbed the poor fellow, "hath no stay—no restraint."

He again paused to allow the emotions which unmanned him, to spend themselves. He then added these words,—*"I forgot what I was before—I forgot that you knew, Miss Maxwell, what I have hitherto been. I cannot,—I do not blame you for your distrust. Only dismiss me, and I shall leave London, never more to set foot within it, if you have doubt of me."*

"And where would you go, were I to dismiss you, John?" asked Sophia, the tears trickling down her cheeks.

"I know not," cried Dimmock; "most probably to perdition!"

He shuddered, and so did the merchant's daughter, who in her turn now took up the discourse.

"I do not distrust you, John,—I have never once had a doubt of your reformation, from the first time that I ever saw you, at least, from the evening that I led you and yours to a lodging in Cloth Fair. I entertain not the slightest suspicion of your good faith—your honourable dealing with me or my dear father; for I flatter myself that I read your character—your feelings in your amended condition, with a perfect accuracy; nor do I doubt, good man, of your becoming one of the most valuable friends of our house and family,—yes, I fancy that I foresee your services to me personally are yet to be of a nature to more than repay any kindness I may have shown to you;—I foresee, John, that I may, ere long, be indebted to you for the preservation even of life itself."

Here Sophia paused in her turn,—she became greatly agitated,—she seemed for an instant to be inspired with a prophetic power; for, looking heavenward, she ejaculated, "Alas! what evils and what agonies are still in my cup and untasted!" And now it was that with an intense eagerness, she grasped the hand of the agitated Dimmock, and nervously inquired, "Will you stand by me, John, through good and through evil report?"

"I shall stand by my young mistress," cried he, "unto the death!"

As soon as mistress and servant had resumed some measure of composure after this agitated scene, Miss Maxwell returned to the subject of the appointed meeting with Arnold, and that of the probability of high temptations being held out to Dimmock, in order to move him to join the interests of the impostors.

"Do you, John, in the exercise of your best judgment and ingenuity, fall in with their views, so as, apparently, to promise going hand-in-hand with them to the fullest extent, even to the ridiculing of the world of me. But you must not all at once, on this your first meeting, exhibit too ready an adherence or compliance. Arnold is subtle, and will need to be dealt with in the most subtle way. I cannot, however, direct you further; but I think that when you and I lay our

wits together, we may, perhaps, inveigle them more and more, to their own deep perdition. In the already great extremity of their condition, their subtle wits will have to yield to their necessities. Now, away with you;—I shall wait for you with impatience till you return. Yet let not haste spoil us."

We have thus interrupted the narrative as relates to Arnold and Dimmock on their meeting in the Churchyard. Well, then, they proceeded to the coffee-house, there to have a deliberate and leisurely talk. When about to take their seats, Arnold said, as if it had been a second thought, although more probably it was but a slight point of his insidious plan,—“I think, Mr. Dimmock, that in a cold winter night like the present we had better repair to some respectable hotel, where something effectually to warm us may be got. I observe that you must be well to do in the merchant's service, for your dress is that of a gentleman, and I am sure your manners and looks are in entire keeping with your raiment. It gives me great pleasure to witness the transformation, I am sure, although it will yield still truer delight to find you vastly bettered every way,—a thing which it is within your immediate grasp to command."

John listened with great apparent complacency to all this harangue, bowing repeatedly, expressive of thanks; and as they proceeded to the hotel, it amused as well as pleased him, to observe with what an elastic step the other sped,—an elasticity which Dimmock correctly enough interpreted as indicating the satisfaction that was prevailing within.

"It would please me more than the possession of all the gold which the impostor has ever handled," John inwardly said, "could I circumvent the villains. I am sure, Miss Maxwell, that this is the truth, even although you were as poor as I have been, or were not in being to reward me."

Having been fairly seated in the hotel, and having had set before them various choice liquors, for which Arnold instantly paid,—exhibiting at the moment a handful of guineas, some five or six of which he, as if with the utmost carelessness, shoved to John,—the villain returned to the theme that was uppermost in his mind.

"I do not know," said he, "that I can make myself more intelligible regarding the subject I hinted at a little while ago; it is even sometimes best, as your own romantic experience must have taught you, Mr. Dimmock, not to put into the form of audible words schemes and enterprises of the loftiest or most delicate character. What say you to the matter mooted?"

Dimmock answered with many hesitations,—professing how deeply he felt the kindness of Miss Maxwell to him and his,—declaring that the world, or at least if not the world, his own conscience, would denounce treachery towards her,—an idea which, John was pleased to see, caused Arnold's lip to curl, as if the villain had said, "Hear the worthless fellow speaking about his conscience! I like the thought."

"I would, at any rate," quoth the apparently half-yielding servant, "require some time to consider of the subject;—I should also wish to have some idea what you would do for me and mine,"—putting emphasis on the word *mine*;—"and above

all, I should hope you would not hastily require of me to touch the life of the young woman."

"Why," cried Arnold, manifestly fast falling into the traps laid by John,—“as to your dear wife, you had better, when you leave this, conduct me to her lodgings. I wish to be introduced to her, and that it had been a little earlier in the evening. I know that the ladies love handsome clothes, and it cheers me when I can serve the ladies. Having once known where your family resides, I can, at any time we fix on, meet you yourself there, Mr. Dimmock."

There was a pause, as if Arnold was considering how best to deal with the more tender idea thrown out by John.

"I understand your difficulties and delicacies, Mr. Dimmock," said the murderous miscreant, "relative to your benefactress, and I appreciate your feelings. Most probably you will never be required to go to any extremity, at least I hope not; indeed I think you can better serve yourself and us also, by another and quite a harmless course of procedure. Harmless did I say? Did you, Mr. Dimmock, know as much of the *wickedness*, the *uncirtuousness*, the *revengeful malignity* of the young lady as Crawford and I do, you would dread her more than the most poisonous serpent we ever read of. But of this another time—*another time*,"—he repeated the words with emphasis, desirous, no doubt, that the precise terms should be conveyed to the young lady's ears.

There was again a pause, which, like the former, was filled up with the tasting of the liquors, and such by play as the following:—

"I am not, Mr. Dimmock, a deep drinker—never was; but I am a choice drinker. Help you yourself, and as you have a mind, Mr. Dimmock. I do not press you to hurt yourself: the nature of our business does not allow of deep drinking."

While thus talking, Arnold was actually helping John as urgently in manner as possible, while the said John was fully aware that the liquor was of an extremely animating nature.

Arnold again proceeded with the main topic.

"A part of the harmless course which I have alluded to would be to forward Crawford's suit with the merchant's lovely daughter. Prior to this, as I dare say you may have heard, I should have said to any one that their marriage was a thing certainly to occur; but a variety of circumstances have interposed; and since the breaking off of the match, (which I do trust is but of the nature of lovers' quarrels—temporary), she has really shown a most diabolical desire to ruin and destroy him. Me also she would drive to the devil, if she could; but of that I take not much heed: only I think it is a pity that she should retain such a hostility towards my young and accomplished friend; and therefore it is that I would highly reward your services, were these in no other or more difficult way exerted than in bringing about a reconciliation between the two young and really interesting people."

"I am sure," exclaimed John, with apparent joy, and as if relieved from an awful obligation, "services such as you mention must at all times be pleasureable, and you cannot doubt my readiness to employ them. But how and when shall I set about the work."

"This very night,"—said Arnold; "as soon as

you see the young lady, take your own most cautious mode of advising that she should at least condescend to receive a visit from Mr. Crawford at her father's house; let the day be to-morrow; let the hour be close on that of their dining time, in the hope that she may invite the wooer to partake of the meal with them;—nothing, Dimmock, like a good dinner and plenty of excellent wine with and after it, for bringing about reconciliations! Do all this in the first instance and you will never repent it, but bless the hour when I opened to you my mind."

Upon coming to this understanding, Arnold accompanied John to Cloth Fair, when the traitor presented as many guineas to Mrs. Dimmock as would clothe her from head to foot in silks, with an adequate consideration also for the child. An arrangement having been made to meet John on the following evening about the same hour at his lodgings, the deluded and infamous schemer set off for his own habitation.

John was overjoyed, but not merely so much on account of the presents of gold pieces, as of the direction in which he might serve Miss Maxwell. He related every thing to her,—much of it in the precise words spoken by Arnold himself; and took care not to forget the alleged *wickedness, unvirtuousness, and revengeful malignity*. He especially minded the threat of, "*at another time*," and was not a little astonished to see how it affected his young mistress. Upon the whole, however, she was delighted with the issue of John's interview with the impostor,—believing, as she did, that it would lead to further power over the villains.

"By and bye," said she, "I will have you to pretend yielding to their proposition to get rid of me altogether, by pistol, by dagger, or by drug,—a point to which I shall assuredly drive them,—and then down upon the monstrous miscreants!"

"As I before declared," cried John, "I shall faithfully serve you, lady, to the death, if that be required,—against every evil report or foe."

"Thank you, Dimmock," cried Sophia; "let Crawford be shown to the drawing-room to-morrow, when he calls; I know how to receive him, and most anxiously hope that it shall be at the very time that Captain Stewart bath arrived to dinner. I wager that I put Arnold's hopeful pupil out of humour with his meal to-morrow."

Captain Stewart was as punctual as anticipated, and as charming and charmed as such an accomplished gentleman could be on the hospitable reception of the wine-merchant, and the sight of the loveliness, now so animated and borne up by the mind, on the part of Sophia. Mr. Maxwell was, besides, pleased at the idea that his former intimate acquaintance, Crawford, was to call upon them in the course of the day, in order that he might be one of the guests,—although nothing was farther from the idea of his daughter, who had never intrusted any such particulars of the young villain's character or ways to her parent, as to give rise to any deep-rooted displeasure.

Captain Stewart arrived, and not twenty minutes afterwards did Dimmock usher into the wine-merchant's drawing-room Mr. James Crawford, the apt pupil of one of the vilest men that ever infested the British metropolis. And how do you think the now not inexperienced gentleman in ex-

tremely exacting circumstances bore himself when so suddenly and curiously grouped? Here were not only the merchant whom he had duped, although afterwards made to repay the monies,—but the gallant officer he had helped to waylay and plunder, and also the clear-eyed and clear-headed witness of the capital offence, ushering him into the company of one he could so ill afford often to confront,—not to speak of Sophia, his fellest, most skilful, and persevering enemy.

Surely James had need for all his hardihood and ingenious resources on such an occasion; nor assuredly could he have endured to have continued one half hour at the dinner-table with such company, even although Miss Maxwell had satisfied him that her persecution was at an end.

After bowing to each in the most collected manner he could, and having uttered a few common phrases of courtesy, he managed in better style than could have been expected to ask pardon for calling at such an unreasonable hour, alleging that nothing but a matter of a very pressing nature would have induced him to commit such a breach of manners.

"It is for your ear, Miss Maxwell, that I have a message; I shall not detain you for a minute."

Having so said, he motioned to withdraw,—the young lady promptly following him to the parlour below; while Captain Stewart stared with amazement, not unaccompanied by the merchant's wonder, who, however, disposed well enough of the scene.

"I have some acquaintanceship with Mr. Crawford," observed Stewart.

"Sir, he was at one time," replied the merchant, "a very frequent visitor at my house; but I believe some misunderstanding arose between him and my daughter. This in a measure will account for the abruptness we have just witnessed. Lovers' quarrels! I do not interfere!"

As soon as Crawford and Sophia had reached the parlour, she demanded with a withering scornfulness, what brought him there, and the cause of his insolent, offensive intrusion?

James, had he not been at once so confronted and subdued as he entered the drawing-room, as to drive out of him all his browbeating hardihood, would have answered, as preconceived,—"*My intrusion and insolence is nothing to yours, fallen woman!*"

Instead of this, however, he could merely, after some show of deprecating politeness and forced courtesy, say, that he came in the distraction of his love and admiration of her, to lay himself at her feet, and to sue for her hand, trusting that she would no longer deny him her heart.

And now for the reply:

"Were it not that I am as tender as I have often told you of late, of my own vile intercourse with you, as I am vengefully set on your destruction and final perdition, I would at this moment call the plundered Captain Stewart before you, together with our servant, Dimmock, as witness, and next minute have you in the hands of the officers of justice. Arnold would speedily be in the same predicament. As it is, I only reproach you, ye miscreant, lamenting that I am not a man, to smite you in the face. Begone!"

CHAPTER XLII.

"A person who is too nice an observer of the business of others, like one who is too curious in observing the labour of bees, will often be stung for his curiosity."
POPE.

CRAWFORD slunk away like a hound from Mr. Maxwell's mansion, instead of coming off with flying colours; and instead also of bringing glad tidings to his tutor, the infamous Arnold, who was housed at no great distance, having nothing but things that were laden with dismay for them both, to deliver. They now, without their wonted prudence, broke out into such passionate expressions and purposes of vengeance against her, whom they habitually designated the fiend, that the landlord of the tavern where the scene took place, being quite alarmed, thinking a deadly feud had arisen in his house, rushed hastily into the apartment where they sat, or rather stood, like beings distracted.

"We are friends, landlord!" cried Arnold, "and are only loud because of the cruel wrong that has been done us elsewhere!"

"I beg, gentlemen, that you will not allow that alleged wrong to disturb my establishment," said Boniface; adding, "It must be a strange injury, indeed, that would make me so far forget myself as to fill the ears of strangers with threats that you will have the honour and the life of any young lady, be she the wine merchant Maxwell's daughter or any other honest man's child. I request that you pay the score and go elsewhere: I like not the custom of assassins."

"Worse and worse," exclaimed the pair of impostors, as they stepped from the tavern kept by such a vigilant and quick eared-landlord. "We must really rush to the last extremities at once, otherwise we shall be utterly undone before the expiration of a week."

Such were the repeated language and thoughts of both the worthies, dismayed and distracted as they were, there being at the time no resource or other courage in them than that of repairing to the obscure public-house in the western part of the metropolis, where Crawford had before sworn that he should either wed or bed the persecuting fiend.

Having gained the said obscure place, they called lustily for drink, and drank as lustily, until meteor visions again dazzled their eyes and souls.

Having been fairly seated, Arnold asked,—if being the first utterance on the part of either that had the semblance of composure, since James had delivered himself after quitting Miss Maxwell,— "How did Dimmock bear himself towards you, Crawford? Was it in such a way as to indicate that he is in our interest?"

"Why," answered the younger of the colleagues, "the fellow was exceedingly polite. He opened the door to me, and received me with a kind smile. When he again did a like service, in order to let me out, it was with an expression of vexation, saying 'Good day, Mr. Crawford; remember me to your friend,' of course meaning you, Mr. Arnold. The fellow had not an opportunity of showing me more kindness; but from what I observed of him, I should say he is not our enemy."

"Good," cried Arnold, "and this reminds me of my appointment with him at his own family lodgings, in the vicinity of Smithfield. Drink, James, and I will tell you what I propose to do this evening with Dimmock. I shall not longer stick at trifles."

James drank freely, and so did the elder worthy, although not so recklessly.

"Bedded with me she shall be," cried Crawford; "it would be worth bartering my life for it, this same sweet revenge. And oh! then, I really believe that she will go utterly out of her senses, or die of vexation and dishonour."

The murderous miscreant having spoken of killing and dying, immediately brought Arnold out.

"At Dimmock's this very night, I shall plot how the fellow is to administer a narcotic to her, persuading him that he can run not the slightest danger of detection. I shall provide the stuff, and name the time; but giving space enough, James, for your scheme to be first of all tried. Yet how are you to accomplish it? It will not be easy or safe to carry her off by sheer violence; and how else can you get the master of her vile person?"

"Of that difficulty," answered James, "I have recently thought deeply and often, and have come to the clear conviction that her very curiosity will throw her in my power, almost any day that I am abroad. Of late I have scarcely once paraded the streets in the neighbourhood of Bedford Square,—you know my business in Gower-street,—that it has not cost me a great deal of trouble to give her the double and slip which hitherto I have managed to do, by means of certain intricacies and friendly doors in the vicinity of Tottenham-Court-Road. To-morrow, however, and next day, and next again, if the earlier day does not serve me I shall be in the same neighbourhood; when instead of skulking away and concealing myself, I shall openly and directly,—the moment that I observe her on my track,—proceed to No.—Gower Street, where, having the young ladies sufficiently schooled to the snare, and the keeper of the brothel set out in her most matronly style,—a thing so fitting for the old procuress,—a thousand to one but the fiend follows me, thinking it a private and respectable dwelling, in order, as is her wont, to ferret out further particulars in my course of life. On coming to the door, she will no doubt inquire if Mr. Crawford is within; and a liveried servant shall answer, 'Oh yes! ma'am,—Mr. Crawford and Mrs. Crawford, and one of Mr. Crawford's sisters, are at home: will you walk in ma'am?' To a certainty the snare will take, and when once the demon is housed, take my word for it she escapes not that night," added Crawford.

"Capital, James," cried Arnold; "you are all that I could wish again. It was wrong, it was cruel of me to blame and chide you as I have done; but you will forgive me, knowing how the fiend that I glory in thinking you may further dishonour and abuse, has thwarted and tormented us." Arnold then added, "I think that I may be able to serve your design this very evening, without divulging one item of the particulars, and, without in the least depending upon the fidelity of Dimmock. I shall as if by mere accident, lead

him to believe that you are about to reside in Gower Street, with your mother, whom, I shall say, has come to town with her youngest daughter preparatory to the marriage of Captain Stewart—all which things, being credited by Sophia, who is curiosity's self, are sure to help in the work of entrapping."

"Capital! I also cry," exclaimed James; "I feel the certitude of the snare taking so strongly and palpably, that I shall, the moment that you start for Dimmock's, proceed to give instructions to my fair agents in my contemplated design,—so promising and really romantic! I never yet had a hand in a rape, but will go heart and soul to it in this instance be assured."

At the appointed hour, and while Crawford was maturing his plans in Gower Street, to the great delight and expectations of the abandoned women, who were to be his accomplices, Arnold was in discourse with Dimmock, at the man's lodgings in Cloth-Fair.

"What think you?" said Arnold to John,—"Mr. Crawford's sister, Catherine, will soon be the wife of the Hon. Captain Stewart; a capital match for her, I should say, and a great thing altogether for the Crawford's, one and all of them."

"I have heard something of the intended match" observed the servant to Miss Maxwell, "and I think my young mistress is also aware of the report: indeed I know she is."

"Why," again observed Arnold, "the event must be nearer than I at least contemplated; for Mrs. Crawford and daughter have just arrived in town, and James is about to take up his residence with them:—they have taken an extremely nice house, I am told, in Gower-street, Bedford square."

"I think that will be news to Miss Maxwell," said John Dimmock, in perfect sincerity.

Arnold immediately, with his usual adroitness of the experienced villain, turned to another subject, although not of the murderous nature he had contemplated,—persuaded as he was that it would be better first of all to have Crawford's design tested and tried. Accordingly, leaving a few more guineas with Dimmock's wife, he departed, appointing a meeting with him to take place not on the next, but the evening next again.

John related to his young and inquisitive mistress all that passed between him and Arnold; and Sophia was inordinately lifted up with the idea, of forming an acquaintance with Mrs. Crawford and her beautiful daughter.

"I shall" said she, "as soon as I am introduced to them, or that I introduce myself, preserve the utmost caution, not either to abuse or offend Crawford himself. I wish to be on good terms with his family, at present at least; for report hath made me respect as well as pity the ladies. But yet the day may come, when by means of what I shall gather in their society, I shall the more effectually crush the murderous miscreants, who thirst for my destruction."

Sophia Maxwell! you were wrong—deeply wrong, thus to indulge your passionate curiosity, which was leading you on to such acts of effrontery!

The merchant's daughter fell into Crawford's snare, with all the facility and unsuspectedness that even he or Arnold could have desired:

Nay, after being admitted to the drawing-room

of the supposed Mrs. Crawford, she was so effectually misled, by the intimate knowledge of family circumstances, that she became quite communicative herself.

"Crawford would presently make his appearance, being in his bedroom dressing for a dinner party;—Captain Stewart contemplates marriage with Kate you may have heard of:—your own partiality for my son, who is distractedly in love with you, we are not ignorant of,"—with a variety of similar pieces of information and congratulation, all which went smoothly down, with the for once beguiled and infatuated Sophia.

"Oh!" she said to herself, "Crawford has not divulged much to his family: he has only, like myself, led his parents to understand that he and I had had a lovers' fall out;—and with this assurance she drank of the wine in Gower Street.

Yes, Sophia tasted sparingly—she sipped merely of the ruby liquid handed to her. But the wine-merchant's daughter is not skilled in the matter of flavour or vintage, and criticises not the quality of the drink. Presently a keen thirst seizes her, and she calls for a glass of water.

"Oh!" says the false Mrs. Crawford, we have the finest spring in the world close at hand here,—the very water hath been an inducement to this vicinity."

From the decanter is poured the most limpid and crystal-like beverage that could be conceived—it actually sparkles in the glass; and the unheeding girl drinks deep and heartily. Monstrous! that trickery should be played with that which God hath sent unadulterated and abounding for all his creatures. Water! the emblem of sweet simplicity, of life-giving purity, in this instance, just as the wine, hath been strongly drugged.

Giddiness seizes Sophia; there is a pressure upon her eyelids;—a sense of approaching stupor is within her.

"I am betrayed!" she screams, bounding from the chair, eager to escape.

The ladies rush towards her: and indeed she needs support, for her steps stagger. They speak of the goodness of open and refreshing air, and guide her into the presence of James Crawford.

It is a bed-chamber. Fearful! although there is a dead weight on her forehead, and the light be glazed, Sophia perceives that the room is surrounded with shameful pictures, and that the ladies have resigned her to the care of three horrid-looking women; and in the same instant she comprehends the whole truth of her terrible condition.

"Unhand me!" she shrieks, and with a momentary wrenoh, she bursts from the infamous menial women that are pinioning her arms.

Yes, she bursts from the wretches, and rushes towards the window, to leap from it—to bound through its frame-work.

But she is again in the grasp of the villain's accomplices, and unavailingly are screams and struggles, for they jeer and mock her, lost to the last dreg of sympathy!

Sophia struggles till the blood in her corded veins seems about to break its casements; and most woeful are her looks and cries. Aye, and for a moment she once more appears to be

gaining a mastery over the violence within as well as that without, so mightily great is the soul aroused to its last, most desperate effort.

Alas! alas! it is in the end utterly vain; if the thunderbolt does not smite the wretches,—if Heaven's arm is not stretched out to lift thee out of the infernal den, poor Sophia! thou art sacrificed.

No! there is neither thunderbolt nor miracle; and the merchant's daughter, no longer alive to the slightest or the rudest touch, becomes the prey of him to whom she had once been accustomed so willingly and without violence to surrender herself!

CHAPTER XLIII.

Come—peace of mind! delightful guest!
Return and make thy downy nest
Once more in this sad heart!

COWPER.—*Ode to Peace.*

AFTER the departure of Hunter from the dwelling of Mrs. Pembroke in Guernsey, Emily's mind, so long harassed by the effects of her own frailty, and by the crimes of another, felt considerably relieved, and her spirits were partially elevated.

Not a little pleased was her kind friend to witness this change in the manners of the unfortunate girl; and eagerly did she wait for the result of the young surgeon's visit to Mrs. Crawford.

At length, in a few days, a letter arrived for Emily;—and with a trembling hand, was it opened. The contents teemed with assurances of forgiveness, with promises of pardon. The terms of the epistle, and the language in which it was couched, convinced Emily that a fond mother would overlook the past, and would receive a penitent daughter to her arms. And more—the letter contained the welcome tidings that Mrs. Crawford herself would shortly arrive in Guernsey, in order to embrace her child.

It were useless, even were it easy, to describe the joy occasioned by these news, in the breasts of Mrs. Pembroke and Emily. The former experienced a feeling of maternal interest in the welfare of the deceived girl—deceived and abandoned by a villain; while the latter saw the sun once more rising to disperse a part of those clouds which had lately hung so obscurely and so menacingly over the horizon of her fate. A grateful reply to the affectionate mother was penned; and many kind remembrances were included to the author of all this felicity—to the generous-hearted Henry Hunter.

True to her promise, in about ten days—for the time flew quickly—Mrs. Crawford arrived at the hospitable dwelling, where her Emily had so fortunately discovered an asylum. Deeply affecting was the interview on all sides; but not a word was uttered concerning the past. Once Emily attempted to allude to her disgrace—to revert to the causes of her shame: the tender mother placed her finger upon her daughter's lips, and effectually arrested the unpleasant topic.

"Oh! my parent!" exclaimed Emily, overcome with so much goodness, and feeling that she merited reproaches instead of kindness,—“this is too much—I to have been so guilty—and you to be so benevolent!”

“My dear child,” returned Mrs. Crawford, “we are all frail beings; and a thousand extenuations may be found for your fault. And you, worthy lady,” she continued, addressing herself to Mrs. Pembroke, who had been far from an idle or disinterested spectatress of all that had taken place in her presence; for she was requested not to quit the apartment,—“to you, kind lady—best of women! a mother's sincerest thanks are due. You have been the means of preserving for me a daughter; and may the eternal majesty of heaven, before whose footstool we shall one day stand, and to whom my nightly prayers shall be offered up for your welfare—may that great God repay you for the charity you have evinced and practised towards the friendless wanderer;—for I can never cancel so deep a debt, were I to slave for you, as your lowest menial, on my knees, the rest of my days!”

“Indeed, Mrs. Pembroke, has supplied your place to the utmost of her ability,” said Emily with enthusiasm; for she was delighted to exemplify her gratitude for the truly benevolent treatment she had experienced, although at first a stranger, in Mrs. Pembroke's house, where nought but kindness, smiles, and attention had awaited her from the moment she had become its inmate.

That worthy benefactress declared, while tears trickled down her cheeks, that no thanks were due to her; and that she had merely acted such a part as most others in the world would have done, in similar cases.

“And what of my sister—my brother?” inquired Emily, when the first bursts of transport, feeling, and sensibility were over; “tell me, dear mother—relieve my anxiety concerning them! Do they know of my disgrace—have they spurned their Emily?”

“They are ignorant of all—and will remain so. Of course, your flight could not be concealed—but the causes have been. Your brother, my dear child,” proceeded Mrs. Crawford, “is well, and is, I believe, happy. Catherine is staying with some ladies who are related to Mr. Hunter, and who were delighted to receive her at their house a little distance from London, during my visit to you.”

“And Mr. Hunter himself—where is he—the generous friend, who has procured for me so much happiness?” asked Emily, ere her mother had scarcely finished speaking.

“He remained in London, on business of his own; but he promised to join us in a few days. What may be the nature of his affairs, I know not:—shortly, however, we may look for his arrival.”

Mrs. Crawford then detailed many events which had lately taken place in London, without once referring to Arnold, for she was fearful of exciting the too sensitive feelings of her daughter.

Lord Fanmore, she said, was reported to have been so inconsolable for the loss of his son. Captain Stewart was almost constantly with him, and vainly endeavoured to administer comfort to his aged parent. But the old nobleman had looked upon his departed heir as the only real prop of the Fanmore family—as the only fit successor to so high a title—the only remaining scion of the true branch; because, much as he loved his children, the more refined tastes and generous



disposition of the Captain did not so well coincide with his, as did those of the son he had lost.

With regard to Sir George Mornay, Mrs. Crawford had heard but little.

"Is he still in town, do you know?" inquired Mrs. Pembroke, averting her head as she spoke.

"I cannot exactly satisfy you," returned Mrs. Crawford; "for to tell you the truth, up till the very moment when I left London, my mind was perplexed by various matters, and my time was too much occupied in various ways, to allow me an opportunity of——"

"You know not, my dear madam, whether he is even in health?" interrupted Mrs. Pembroke.

A reply was given in the negative; and Mrs. Crawford proceeded to unfold several family affairs to Emily. We may suppose the indignation and resentment that filled the afflicted girl's bosom, when she heard of the diabolical conduct of Mr. Stewart; for she loved her sister, and would now

have given worlds to have embraced her;—but pride, shame, and a variety of feelings compelled her to coincide with the wishes of her mother—viz. that neither James nor the innocent Catherine should be made acquainted with her disgrace. As for Arnold, she did not dare to question Mrs. Crawford concerning him; nor did that lady mention his name.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Heaven winked not when the deed was done.

BEN JONSON.

IMMOLATED as poor and prying Sophia had been, one should have thought that the wretches who were the perpetrators and accessories of the outrage, would have had, if not compunctions, at least fears and terrors about them for the issue.

On the other hand, the scene that followed her last unavailing struggle with the obscene boasts, was one of long-continued revel and riot. Crawford, who, with well-lined pockets, drank immoderately, persuaded himself that he had achieved a great victory,—that he had had his revenge slaked in splendid style.

Yes, that bed-chamber of abominable guilt and shameful violence was the sphere of a long night's gross debauchery:—songs filthy, speech unclean, and acts of worse complexion—brutal indecency,—characterising the adept Crawford and his abandoned associates. The only thing that can be reviewed without the strongest revulsion of soul was, that the merchant's daughter was not cognisant of the abominations around her—that she was in so far as the terrible vice of the scene was concerned, an unconscious and innocent participator.

At length, however, the horrible orgies became too diabolical and tumultuous, even for the dragged girl to remain unawakened; and when she did open her eyes, and arrived at something like an understanding of her position, and of the circumstances which had preceded her assignment to the foul bed in which she found herself, what think you, must have been her loathing and despair?

Sophia gazed all about her,—she tossed her arms, swinging them around her disturbed brow, and fain would have persuaded herself that it was a troubled dream that harrowed her soul. She looked again, and there they were, the veritable wretches that had mastered her senses and her arms, and by her side, too, the miscreant Crawford, who, of course, had plotted the whole conspiracy. She shook frightfully, and knew not what to do. To die by the hands of the miserable creatures was the last and least of her fears: but how to escape, and still more, how to encounter her father, now that the light of another day began to shine around, were the terrors which she had. She again threw herself upon the pillow—covered her head, her brow throbbing painfully from the effects of the drug and from the perception of the whole awful truth—and invoked annihilation. It was now that her extremely agitated state half awoke Crawford, and also brought down upon her the rude complaint of the besotted women strewed around the chamber.

"What is it that the wench wants?" cried one of the brutes; "I am sure she is in clean sheets, and with the nicest of young men. Set her up indeed! Did not she force herself amongst us unbidden? Serve her right to toss her out into the streets. But first we must see if her pockets are empty."

"Well said, my woman," Crawford stammered out; "she has done me a trick or two, and now it is my turn. She fleeces me whenever she has a mind, and I think there can be no harm in paying oneself back again. Let us to the plunder, my doxies; then tell her to begone. She will know better another time not to obtrude herself upon a quiet but game chap like myself. To the purse and the pockets, I say!"

The wretches actually rifled poor Sophia, and drove her, nothing loath, into the streets on a raw and bleak morning in the winter time.

Whither the staggering and broken-hearted girl went directly on leaving the house of sacrifice in Gower Street, which, no doubt, was all decent and peaceable to look on by the mere passer-by, it falls not within our knowledge to impart; but that she wandered like a demented and lost creature for hours of that disconsolate morning, without arriving at her father's door, must be admitted; seeing that the wintry sun was gleaming through the forenoon clouds, and sending in his ruddy rays to her father's parlour, when she was received by the wine-merchant's domestics, Dimmock and the pair of female servants, who made up the complement of the household hands.

Drooping, and her knees almost cleaving to the pavement, John Dimmock was the first to perceive his young mistress's approach; and the mended man's first exclamations did honour to his intelligence and feeling.

"To receive my poor young lady with kindness, who, I am sure, has fallen into the hands of villains, shall be my first care; but a hardly less hazardous and delicate duty, is how to acquaint her distressed father of her coming."

Oh! woe-begone and demented is poor Sophia, her raiment and tresses all in disorder—her cheek blanched,—her eyes lustreless, except when darting wild and staring glances. Dimmock and the maidens lend a gentle aid,—they conduct Sophia to the parlour, where, all astray in thought, and ignorant among whom she is,—quite unconscious, indeed, of her own movements, she allows herself to be seated, still stark staring with vacant and uncertain looks.

"Let Mr. Maxwell be brought!" cried Dimmock; "what if she should breathe her last, and he not beside her?"

The wine-merchant had retired to his bed-room an hour before, utterly crushed and hopeless; but now had to be aroused to behold his only living and loving child with her reason for the time unthroned, and her recent troubles all a mystery. He entered the parlour, shaking from head to foot; but when he beheld the utterly stupid stare of his daughter, the blow which reached his heart was heavy and bitter in the extreme. A burst of passionate tears came to his relief, enabling him to utter these few, homely, and touching words,—“My dearest Sophia, do you not know me—your fond and heart-broken father?”

But a wilder and more meaningless gaze was all the answer; and while the servants administered water, and spoke consoling words to parent and child, she evinced not the slightest heed of what was passing around.

The physician's services were required, and after four days of doubtful illness, Sophia Maxwell was pronounced beyond danger, and body and mind to be arriving at a tolerably healthy condition again.

"Dear father!" she now said, "seek not to inquire into my recent miseries; they shall all be disclosed to you in the fitting time. Suffice it at present to say that I was not a participator in wickedness, save that I made myself a little too busy regarding other people's affairs, and that they took a mean revenge."

"My child," cried the deating parent, "why

don't you concern yourself alone with me and mine? I know how valuable and skilful have been your services since the period when reverses set in against me; but, without wishing to obtrude too much upon your feelings and tastes, let me implore you to consult me, and me alone, hereafter as to your fancies and your occupations."

Sophia, of course, promised—perfectly aware how much she had exposed herself to reproof and suspicion.

"However deeply I have been wronged and outraged by the plotting villains," she said to herself, "by the base Crawford and his viler tutor, I have yet myself to blame for rushing into the den of iniquity; and seeing that the foolish step surrounds my conduct with a double and apparently a shameful and unpardonable folly, I must abide the reproaches of my own conscience and the sneers of the miscreants in silence, waiting for my day of rich retribution. And yet my persecution of the wretches ceases not, but shall become more subtle and malignant."

Let us now return to Crawford and Arnold.

There was a mighty glorification after what these miscreants were pleased to characterise as a triumph over "the fiend," as achieved in Gower Street. One might have thought from their crowing that it was a manly victory, and one that would have honest and virtuous fruits instead of being over a weak woman's provoked efforts and in the most nefarious of causes. And if their boasting was loud and fulsome on the day which immediately followed the outrage, how extravagant became their joy, when, for at least a week, they never once more heard of the young lady's existence.

"I told you," said Crawford, "that I should, in all probability, first bereave her of her reason, and then of her life. Be assured, Mr. Arnold, the thing is in the direct course of being accomplished. Onward, therefore; let us push our grand enterprises and be ready on the first alarm to take ourselves off."

"Excellent, James: you are more than all I ever hoped or expected of you," exclaimed the arch-impostor; "we shall far more than realise our original magnificent scheme."

These premature congratulations transpired day after day, in Conduit Street, or wherever the miscreants met immediately after the incidents and outrage described. In fact, the pair were becoming so thoroughly confident and daring,—believing that Sophia Maxwell could not much longer annoy them, or expose their monstrous crimes,—that new and more barefaced impostures were in the course of being hatched by them, putting to the blush even the effrontery of the story of Fitzgerald.

It so happened that one forenoon when the colleagues—Arnold and Crawford—were revelling in the delights of their anticipated new harvests,—heartening themselves, besides, by means of the bottle and cup, which were every day growing more essential to their glee and the readiness of their inventions,—that John Dimmock was announced, as desiring an interview with the elder and arch-impostor.

The thing was promptly granted.

"Well, Mr. Dimmock," said Arnold, "you

will think that I have been blameably neglectful of you, not having called for the last week or so, to inquire how you prosper at Mr. Maxwell's; but I must be on an early night in the vicinity of Smithfield, when I shall do myself the pleasure of looking in at Cloth Fair. By the way, how is your young and sweet mistress, Miss Maxwell?"

"Never better, I believe, than when I left her about an hour ago; she seems in great spirits indeed," answered John.

"We have not—that is to say, my friend, Mr. Crawford there and myself,—had the pleasure of seeing her, or hearing from her of late," observed Arnold; then having given a significant wink to Dimmock, which was meant also to tickle the pupil, James, "We were beginning to suppose that you had been busying yourself in our interests. Remember," added the miscreant, "you can never catch us unprepared to reward you, Mr. Dimmock. The sooner you are fully in our copartnery the better for yourself and for us, my friend."

"It would have been premature," observed John, "according to your own views when you and I last talked over the matter, Mr. Arnold, for me to have taken the business so entirely into my own hands. I have, in fact, been waiting for further instructions—for further—"

"Oh! I understand you, Mr. Dimmock,—for a few more guineas. Is not that it, my friend?"

"Why, Mr. Arnold," answered John, "you have a very good and clear idea of people's thoughts and necessities; but what I mean at this time particularly to impress upon you is this,—not to think that the fiend has forgotten you, or harbours a less wicked disposition towards you than before. Quite the contrary; for yesterday and to-day, I am sure she has been bringing all that she knows or suspects to bear against you to something like a conclusion. She has not only been much closeted with a lawyer and a magistrate's clerk, but this very night, on Westminster Bridge, I am to endeavour to have Mr. Crawford brought, when her intention may be guessed. Should you then make your appearance, Mr. Crawford, be not astonished if you are not only handed over to the police, but made to answer in the presence of the Hon. Captain Stewart for certain by-gone passages, which it would be as well were they buried in oblivion."

"Yes, bury her!" cried Crawford: "and with all my heart, the sooner out of sight the better!" He subjoined, "Did you say, Dimmock, that I should be instantly brought face to face with Captain Stewart? And what, I pray, would be the nature of your evidence, John, in that predicament?"

"The nature of my testimony," said the acute servant of the wine-merchant, "would very much depend on circumstances. Meanwhile, however, I manifest to you a friendly disposition when I forewarn you, that you were never more in danger from Maxwell's daughter than you are now, and that you are in a very great mistake, if you presume that she has lately either been idle in her preparations, or dispirited. She is ten times more set against you, during the last two or three days than ever I beheld her!"

"Has she said nothing recently to my preju-

dice?" cried Arnold; "perhaps she has become forgetful of me, not having kept up the intercourse with her as you have done, James."

"If you think any such thing," answered Dimmock, "you are egregiously in error; for I believe that about the very same hour that she is to exhibit such activity and art, in order to inveigle and arrest your friend, Mr. Crawford, will find her in pursuit of you yourself, Mr. Arnold, with the same sort of evidence and enmity."

"So close and soon upon us as that!" cried both of the villains.

"What, friend Dimmock, would you have us to do?" inquired Arnold, not a little agitated, and also not a little desirous to have Mr. Maxwell's servant to involve himself in the conspiracy.

"Have you to do?" answered John in his accustomed blunt manner:—"I should have thought you did not require my assistance to tickle your inventive 'powers.' Then, after a pause, he added, "Westminster Bridge and its vicinity, any time after nightfall, present excellent opportunities for disposing of inconvenient customers."

"How would you proceed, friend?" inquired they both.

"I have a note to leave, according to my directions, for Captain Stewart, at Lord Fanmore's, immediately on departing from this," replied John,—"requesting that the gallant gentleman shall meet the young lady, Miss Maxwell, at the middle arch of Westminster Bridge precisely at nine o'clock this evening; and although the captain may not know very clearly for what purpose his presence is demanded, yet thus far he has been, I know, put into possession of the matter as to believe that he will then have one of the highwaymen pointed out to him, who some months ago so barefacedly eased him of his money at Hounslow. Now, I'm to accompany the young lady at that hour, and could assist either of you to a step or two; only, I cannot work for nothing. I must have a cool hundred down from each, and a written agreement to come in for a share,—say a small one,—of your future profits, so far, at least, as these are no longer to be marred by the interference of Sophia Maxwell, and her ceaseless persecution."

"Very fairly offered and ingeniously suggested," cried Arnold, echoed by James, his pupil; "we can have no objections to these terms, provided we have any tolerable assurance of your being able, Mr. Dimmock—for I do not now doubt your will,—to serve us by first serving yourself. Still, I should like to have a more distinct understanding how you are to accomplish the end you so confidently predict, without danger to us and to yourself as well. What will the meeting on the bridge accomplish as regards the young lady's ability to return to her father's?"

"I am thus far prepared to set your mind at ease on these points," answered John; "Miss Maxwell will be in the disguise, as on former occasions, of a boy; I should have Mr. Crawford to be some ten or fifteen minutes before the hour of nine at the appointed span of the bridge, and I, on bringing up the damsel, shall state that Captain Stewart, for particular reasons best known to himself, has desired that she will first meet him on the steps to the river, where he will land by boat from a dinner-party in the vicinity

of Vauxhall. Now, let Mr. Crawford be on the steps, also in disguise, so as to be unknown and unsuspected by the damsel; and it will be a bungled job, if either one or other of us, cannot lend her a shove, the tide being at that time sure to run at a most desperate rate downwards, sweeping her to the bottom, before she well knows that she is fairly in the water."

"Then will there be nothing for me to do?" cried Arnold, exhibiting a wonderful anxiety to have his hand in this curiously contrived scheme; "I should like above all things to assist in giving the fiend a dip."

"I have considered of that too, Sir," replied John; "and I would have you to be at no great distance,—say on the Westminster side of the river, and on the steps that guide to the water at that end of the bridge. Let us be prepared for a like experiment at both extremities; and I need hardly inform you that it is only for the damsel's belief that I shall have the tale of Captain Stewart's appearance dressed up: you can hardly think that any other person except the mad girl would ever believe in such a cock-and-bull story."

Drowning persons catch at straws; nor could any one have readily credited that the experienced and veteran villain, Arnold, or the apt pupil, Crawford, would have abruptly fallen in with Dimmock's contrivance, partly concocted, to be sure, by Sophia herself; who, now altogether madened by the late outrage committed on her, thought it unnecessary to stop at any obstacle which deceit or a trumped-up story might present.

"We shall, Dimmock," had she said "have a swimming if not a drowning match,—perchance on the part of both the monsters. You must hire an acquaintance to personate Captain Stewart, and I shall have two or three fellows in the garb of the officers of justice. I shall not trouble myself with any disguise; but the whole of us will surround Crawford at once, as he proceeds to the steps on the Lambeth side,—you yourself being the loudest accuser, although not a hand is to be laid on the miscreant; and ten to one but he plunges into the flood, preferring drowning to the gibbet, although being an expert swimmer, as I have heard him boast, he will very likely trust to that mode of possible escape. Having thus acted and borne ourselves to the pupil, let us essay a similar course with the arch-impostor. I really have no wish at the present to see an end put to their career; yet have not many dislikes even to that issue. I would rather have the serious laugh turned against them, and the chance of a still more horrible doom to their fate."

It may be easily understood from all this scheming of the young woman, that her mind had received a terrible shock by the abominable and cruel treatment which she had encountered in Gower Street.

Ever after, from the moment that her faculties acquired something of their wonted activity and clearness, she had been studying how most effectually and variously she could repay the villains, making Dimmock to a great extent her confidant, and even taking the astute and not inexperienced fellow's advice with regard to many points.

In fact, so engrossing did her application grow towards a course of ceaseless vindictive persecution, that it threatened the health of her physical con-

stitution and was unpleasantly colouring her mental powers and daily tastes. Her father, not the most far-seeing of men, at least in a philosophical and metaphysical sense, could not but perceive the change which was taking place, not only in her looks, but in her manners, both of a household and personal nature.

"Indeed, I dread," he would say to himself, and also to the medical gentleman most familiar with the family, "lest my daughter go beside herself. There have," he would add, "been traces of insanity among her predecessors on the mother's side; nor can I help feeling that the most melancholy end to which my dear son brought himself, was in part owing to a predisposition to derangement."

Miserable contemplation! How destructive to one's peace of mind to have the constant and prevailing dread of insanity's approach, whether the victim is to be one's own self, or of some individual most dear to us.

CHAPTER XLV.

"A deeper plunge awaits thee, Harold!"
Old Play.

DIMMOCK had conducted Sophia's measures with so much address and success, that when he returned to her, she became altogether transported at the thought of the issue which she confidently believed would attend the contrivance.

"And so my faithful friend, John," she cried, "they paid you down a cool hundred each, making most certain of getting for ever rid of poor me! They have, I learn, had a rare harvest of late, not being pestered or frightened out of their wits by the wine-merchant's daughter,—*the fiend*, as they are pleased to designate me. And the co-partners! you are, John, to have a share in the spoil. How will you now put up with the idea of having for ever broken off with the villains should our scheme at Westminster Bridge succeed this night; for should they come safe to land again after a sound bathing, they will never trust you more?"

"Well, Miss Maxwell, I do not much care about that," answered Dimmock; "it has not been the pleasantest office to which you have put me, this same make-believe of being ready to serve them and to destroy you, madam, now that I have begun to feel the comforts of honesty and fair dealing. I would rather, in fact, work upon the fears than the hopes of the villains."

"That you shall do if I and they live beyond this night," cried Sophia; "but methinks you might have had the chance of fleecing them a little further, even before we set out upon our evening's enterprise. I would have had an appointment with one or other of them at Cloth Fair, and in your lodgings, preparatory to their wending their way westward, in order to give me a drenching."

"And so I have, Miss Maxwell," said John, chuckling at the matter which he of himself had planned as soon as he found they were to be caught;—"Arnold and James Crawford are to repair to my lodgings, the moment that darkness sets in, that they may each of them be provided

with a disguise, in order that you may not very readily discover them; and I am to provide the apparel, it being left to me to select such dress as I think will be the most deceiving: they are to pay me handsomely for my trouble."

"Capital, John!" cried the transported Sophia, evincing not a little of that morbid and engrossing passion for revenge that in this instance, at least, partook more of the comic than had been wont to characterise her contrivances and plots against their peace. "What sort of a garb do you intend for the wretch Crawford?"

"Oh, I shall give him a long cloak. And as for the other miscreant, we shall have him in woman's clothing."

"No, no, John, this latter will not do, for I really would rather they came to land again; the villain would be sadly incommoded by the dress you mention," observed the lady plotter.

"But hear me a step farther," exclaimed John; "I have not always been above playing tricks with excisemen and the like, as I once before told you; yet never having been blood-thirsty, I always wished to stop short of taking life. Now, ten to one, be the villains expert swimmers or not, they will find a watery grave among the barges at the time of night we have appointed, and from the rate of the tide. I therefore have bethought me of having a rope or small cord ready to attach to each of the gentlemen,—they unobserving the process, at the time, on account of their alarm; and should they make the plunge, it is but allowing them a thorough cooling and to pluck them out again, in order to have our loudest laugh at their expense."

"Capital, again, I cry," said the delighted Sophia; "and should either of them show a reluctance to take to the water, it is but a sturdy shove on the part of you and our officers of justice. There can be no harm in that when you are so well prepared to rescue as well as to punish."

Every thing being thus far concocted and arranged, the merchant's daughter, and the merchant's man, set practically to work with all industry and zeal.

Certainly it was a curious and unusual occupation for a young lady of the nineteenth century, bred in the metropolis of England; but Miss Maxwell's history for some considerable time back, and for the future, belongs not to the ordinary rate of citizen life. Well, the plot proceeded—the various steps of the contrivance were reaching near to the *denouement*. And now behold the excited girl and the persevering John, with their helps, approaching, through certain districts of Lambeth, the appointed bridge.

"Betake yourself to the top of the steps," said Dimmock to the others: "you will see that I instantly bring the youth Crawford to the spot where he is to await the coming of Miss Maxwell."

On proceeding to the centre of the bridge, he there met with the dupes,—James in a voluminous military cloak, while the other villain paced the pavement something after the manner of a woman of the town,—so anxious was he to keep up the disguise.

"Now, Mr. Crawford," said Dimmock, "it is you who are to have the first chance. I shall be with you in a trice, Mr. Arnold, at the other end, with news of how we have prospered,—perhaps

with the damsel, herself should any thing mar our purpose at the former place."

Away now the colleagues go, but in perfectly opposite directions,—James Crawford loftily bearing himself, yet murderously intent against the life of one to whom he had, on his earlier acquaintance with her, professed unbounded admiration and love. Happy, indeed, would it have been for him, had his soul not grown blacker with guilt than it even was at that era of his criminal career. Now, however, he had flung overboard, as it were, every anchor of hope, making utter shipwreck of his soul.

Pacing rapidly along the bridge, and glancing occasionally, between the pillars of the parapet, at the river, which, licking the stones, swept past, cold and clear, and reflecting the lights that shone down upon the watery surface,—he having been followed closely by the assiduous Dimmock,—Crawford was in full expectation of discovering Sophia in boy's clothing. When, however, he beheld her a short way in the rear, in her proper female attire, and with her several men in the costume of officers of justice his heart at once failed him, and shuddering he said, "I am betrayed!"

"Not so wickedly as I have been pursued," whispered Sophia in a fierce hoarse manner. "Men of justice! it is for you to do your duty. There is but one mode of escape for the fellow, and that is to trust himself to the tide which he intended should have enveloped me. Oh! the villain dreading to die; have at him then, ye men of justice—let the gibbet do its office."

Thus stung and menaced, Crawford plunged into the tide, arresting the attention of sundry passengers on the bridge. But he was allowed to flounder only for a few seconds; or Dimmock, having cried aloud, "I can prevent the suicide," forcibly pulled the cord which a few seconds before had been adroitly fixed to the fellow, and brought him upon the steps again.

"Make speed, Crawford," said Sophia. "I have not yet done with thee; but thou art safe for this once; and now for the other villain!"

James did not linger long in that vicinity, allowing Dimmock and his assistants, together with the vengeful Sophia, to take their course to the other side of the river, where Arnold was impatiently waiting for tidings: something of a similar nature to what had a little before taken place with Crawford here transpired; the difference being that the arch-impostor had not the pluck to trust his body and soul to the tide.

"No," thought he, in the brief moments he had to cogitate, "I dare not in the twinkling of an eye encounter death; I'll breathe to the latest that hell will permit, and then to perdition for ever."

While the miscreant was thus ejaculating, Dimmock tossed around his neck, the prepared noose, and simultaneously lending him a most cordial concussion behind, sent him bodily into the stream; then with a sudden jerk nearly strangling the wretch, he brought him back, seriously hurt as well as frightened and perfectly drenched.

"Now, speed you to join your hopeful pupil," said Sophia; "I have had my sport for this one night. The next will, mayhap, be of a different complexion, but come it will."

It so happened that the affrighted and foiled wretch hurried in the very direction which Crawford had chosen, and that each betook himself to a den familiar to both, neither of them clearly aware of the condition of the other. Crawford had entered first, and was, to save himself the ridicule, trumping up a fine story of having been upset in a waterman's craft, when Arnold made his appearance. His plight was indeed most wretched, and yet it was so ludicrous that Crawford involuntarily laughed aloud, to the no slight annoyance of his friend.

"This is a more serious matter than you seem to understand, young man," said Arnold, whose throat, for the time, was so hurt that he stood in great pain,—exhibiting a most awkward twist, which especially contributed together with the dripping female attire of the gentleman, to his comical aspect. "Yes," repeated the arch-impostor, "it is a serious affair, young man, and you and I shall so find it, you may be certain."

"One thing I am sure of," observed James, in a measure nettled by the sort of menace as well as prediction which seemed to him to be couched in the words just spoken, "had I known that our magnificent schemes were to have been attended with one half of the damnable annoyance, terrors, and mockeries to which I have recently found myself exposed,—in spite too of every caution and guardedness on my part, I should have spurned all the gold and the grandeur of which the British empire can boast, rather than have run the infernal risk, and this too, even if the speculation had presented some show of honour in its front. *Honesty is the best policy*, after all, says the proverb; and I begin to think that the truth is in the familiar adage."

"One thing I know," said Arnold, "that instead of sermonising or being lectured here, I find that I must make haste to have dry clothing. Will you do me the favour, Mr. James Crawford, to order a coach, and have me driven with you to your apartments? Perhaps you will accommodate me with a suit of your clothes till to-morrow, you yourself, I presume, being in need of something dry, and warm to comfort you."

In the course of the drive to Conduit Street but little conversation passed between the colleagues,—hardly any thing more than a few words from each, telling merely so much as to make both perfectly sensible that Sophia Maxwell and John Dimmock had most effectually fooled them; the sentiment also being reciprocally expressed, that the devilry of the trick, its malice, and premeditated cruelty were scarcely to be paralleled.

"I would not," said Arnold, with greater sincerity and more becoming feeling than oft emanated from him, "be the father of that girl, or in any way related to her, were a kingdom the gift given with her: there is something so unnatural even for perverse humanity about her,—something so diabolical, that with all her personal beauty, she appears to me to be growing positively hideous."

There was, indeed, it appears to us, something frightful in the course pursued by the merchant's daughter,—something so ominous of mental perversion and female impropriety, that the ducking affair, and, in fact, all its preliminaries, adjuncts, and immediate results, removed the thing from the comic, and brought it within the compass of

the desperate and tragical; and this seems to be the proper classification of the contrivance, were it merely viewed as emanating from the diseased taste of a young lady whose hopes had been so crushed, and whose peace had been so terribly disturbed, as to work a dread revolution in her nature. These views of her course will not be lessened, when it is told that her maliciousness was not, as she had at first said, satisfied by the ducking scenes; for it somehow got a strong hold of her fancy, as she and Dimmock, along with their pretended officers of justice, were passing Whitehall, that the joke and revenge might be carried a good deal further, before they set their faces to go homeward.

"The villains," said she, "will to a certainty make speed to get dry clothing. They will not, you may be sure, ever trouble you, John, in order to obtain the garbs they cast off in your house. In all likelihood Crawford's residence will be the place that shall immediately receive them. Let us, then, be beforehand with them. We are too many to need to be in dread of their violence."

Having so said, the damsel hurried—taking the lead of the party—towards James's house; no sooner arriving in the neighbourhood, than placing herself and attendants in corners become quite familiar to her, and there impatiently awaiting the appearance of the worthies.

It was not long ere the coach drew up, bringing the dripping gentlemen,—Arnold having by this time so thrown Crawford's cloak around him, as pretty well to cover his feminine attire. As they were in the act of entering the street-door, who but the very persons that had so unceremoniously treated them at Westminster Bridge were close at their heels?

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Sophia, "you will not object to our accompanying you; our stay shall be brief; you know I do not generally annoy you long with my presence."

And what could the colleagues do, but allow Miss Maxwell, their most ingenious and bitter persecutor,—together with the attendants,—to follow them up stairs? They were completely at the mercy of the young lady, and of the evidences which it was in her power to adduce, to their speedy and utter destruction; at the same time that they felt perfectly assured of their safety from an immediate disclosure of their villainies through the damsel's agencies,—so long secure, in fact, as they did not madly kick against her interference and goad her, extremely troublesome as it assuredly was.

Having got fairly into the principal apartment occupied by Crawford, the strange and dauntless Miss Maxwell actually shut the door after the entrance of all her attendants. Having done so, she burst into a fit of immoderate laughter,—it was hysterical, although at first meant to be contemptuous as well as expressive of her sense of having triumphed in a most effectual and original way over her enemies. She laughed wildly, not being able to restrain herself. Tears ran down her cheeks the longer and louder the hysterical affection lasted, till at length she swooned, giving a new turn to the scene.

Not a distinct word had all this while been spoken on either side; and painful indeed it became not merely to the dripping colleagues, but

to the men who had so strangely been serving the merchant's daughter, although indignant looks were shot at Dimmock, as often as his assiduities about his fainting young mistress allowed him to meet the eyes of the impostors.

At last the young lady began to get restored; and as soon as she was able to articulate distinctly a few words, she said, "Arnold, you are now in a condition to tell the world the difference between the water and the hemp;"—then going up close to him, she added, in a sort of whisper, "When shall you be able to inform me how Sir George Mornay, your particular friend, would have taken the dripping and the noose?"

Now, how did the drenched gentlemen bear with this additional intrusion and insult, already worked up, as one would naturally imagine, to a point of madness and sorest indignation? Why, they had so got entangled with Sophia,—were so habituated to her merciless hate,—had been so often trodden on by the damsel, that they had not only become hardened to an obdurate degree, but were driven to a state of defiance,—having been familiarising themselves too with horrid presentiments in their more despairing moments,—sometimes even with the assurance that an issue more fearful than generally followed the highest crimes was to be their fate at last. Still they could not but stare at one another with a kind of vacant wonder for several minutes after the young lady and her party vanished. They stared, and stared till their eyes dilated in a manner that was frightful and ghastly,—tears at length so watering the orbs that they seemed almost to swim; and when they did speak, it was thus:—Crawford damned the girl to the lowest hell,—his teeth gnashed with anguish,—while Arnold applied similar terms to his own bad luck.

It was not very long, however, before they began to reason themselves into a condition of some hopefulness or repose; for what mind is there that can permanently or for a lengthened period dwell in utter despair,—to which no gleam of consoling light ever comes? It is in regions below alone that we can believe there is to be for ever and ever this terrible abandonment. It was Crawford who happened to be the first of the pair to bring some share of relief.

"But," exclaimed he, striking his forehead as if in answer to a hopeful idea which had just jumped into it, "did I not tell you that such treatment of the fiend as she received in Gower Street, would drive her to go quite beside herself, probably soon ending in dissolution? Did you behold the wild glare that is in her looks, and the strange hue that begins to overcast her countenance? To a certainty she is on the borders of insanity; and when once fairly out of her senses, who will mind what she says or does? Ten to one but she will destroy herself, in some fit or another, such as we can contrive to drive her to. Is it not a most likely and pleasing prospect? Let us cheer up and hug the idea."

"I am truly thankful to you, James, for the relief you have lent me. There is, in reality, no other chance for us to exist in any endurable condition,—in fact, to exist at all, unless we take to our hearts some such hope and comfort as you hold out. We must, therefore, cling to the same, and, as we have before resolved, make utmost

speed to realise our brightest dreams, before any overwhelming catastrophe is likely to overtake us. Our gains can be largely and speedily increased; and not perceiving what new or more defined way there is for the she-fiend to torment us, and that we only run the probable risk of having her exacting from us sums of money,—for one purpose or another,—let us submit to the imposition with the best grace that we can, so long as the residue makes it worth our while so to submit."

"It is not very easy," observed Crawford, "to submit to such imposition, insult, and injury, as we have sustained this night; but I suppose there is no help for it, but to do as you suggest. Yet, oh! how should I rejoice to have my way with the wretches,—both with her, who in the first instance was victimised by me, and with that fellow Dimmock, whom she has so thoroughly got into her pay. To see the blood of each of them shed would be a sweet and rich feast for me!"

The pair then went on to re-arrange some of their impending plans, and also to talk more cursorily of the past as well as of the future. They glanced at their good fortune as well as bad luck. One speculated about the unfettered career which they might have had, if Crawford had never met with the Maxwells, or had an amour with the merchant's daughter; and James in his turn reverted to the letters suggestive of conspiracy against her life, and various other fruitless or damaging schemes which Arnold had hatched; but neither of them felt or acknowledged that every crooked course and vile enterprise must necessarily expose their contrivances to evils, sooner or later, equivalent—nay, more sharp and enduring than all the profits and pleasures that possibly can be contemplated at first by the most visionary and sanguine projectors.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Last night the gods show'd me a vision."
Cymbeline.

It is necessary that we again and again bring back to memory the position, the circumstances, and the peculiar training, so to speak, of Sophia Maxwell. Remember, reader, that the most insignificant of human creatures, according to man's reckoning, may be either full of worth, or an example to enforce the worthiest and most impressive lessons. We found the merchant's daughter, the indulged, the luxuriating, the unsuspecting, and the amorous maiden. What else could she have been, or thousands also in the great world of London, bred to nothing other than valueless thought, and unstrenuous action? But Sophia, with really good natural parts,—wholly uncultivated in a healthful manner,—fell where many of her sex and position, perhaps, might not have stood. Have charity, therefore, and forgiveness; be not too acrimonious, or straightly-laced, ye female censors; for perchance you never were in the way of such peril as she encountered, or of such temptation as led her from the paths of virtue into a labyrinth of wrong and a sphere of suffering.

Let us devote the better portion of a chapter

to the damsel's history at the period to which she has now been brought; for a new change was to come over her spirit, or a new modification of that enthusiasm and fervour with which she had been naturally endowed,—the occasion and an adequate cause for such development only being required, in order to have her temperament and disposition shown in their ample colours.

We have already seen and recognised how first her spirit was stung to revenge and strung to action,—how also almost every new day and every additional incident fed that spirit, till at length, it acquired a degree of morbidity that threw her into the very jaws of outrage and destruction,—awakening more terrible passions and resolves, and a more devastating eagerness. Poor girl! the continual stretch to which her mental faculties and violated affections were put, threatened by this time to overturn her understanding, to undermine her rational powers.

Now, her father at the period at which we have arrived,—incapable of entering into Sophia's refinements, being also entirely unsuspecting of her latter most intense experiences and pursuits, as well as of her fearful fall from the path of chastity, and being, besides, desirous of establishing her own life,—thinking, no doubt, that this would give a new turn to her fancies, which any one who was frequently in her society might see were in some way producing a great change in her temper, and even in her looks,—did something not very far from promising her in marriage to a citizen, of great worth and good circumstances, who sought her hand.

How far astray from a right reading of Sophia Maxwell's real character and recently acquired notions was the merchant when he imagined that it would need but slight persuasion and easily-directed influence, in order to compass his object!

How little did he think that she had in reality conceived an aversion to every man who could be supposed to offer her his hand! The very first clear conception he had of her determination was when on his proposal of the suitable match, she passionately cried—

"My God, grant that I may never marry! this is my daily prayer, and has been for months past."

The merchant was astounded, and for a space was struck dumb.

"I had thought, dear Sophia," at length he said, "that James Crawford was not at one time out of favour with you, although from circumstances into which I have no wish to pry, you seem to have broken off all intimacy with him. It is on this account that I have encouraged the visits of my worthy friend, Mr. Drayson, dreaming not that I should thereby draw from you such an unconditional speech as I have just now heard. However, I will not urge you in any despotic way, but only would have you to bear in mind that my years increase, and that you cannot always have me for a guardian."

"Distant be the day on which you and I am separated, my excellent father," cried she; "it can only be done by the hand of death. I am disgusted with all the world beside."

Sophia Maxwell would have made some kind of answer to her doating parent relative to his



allusion to Crawford, but durst not trust herself, however evasively, with the theme. The conversation accordingly was dropped, he going forth to his ordinary calling in the city, she to her mental excitements and contemplated measures, all the ardour of her nature being now divided between the persecution of the impostors and an extravagant fanaticism. And what think you was the character of the extravagance? Why, nothing other than that of forming a community of young women, who, like herself, should determine to abjure the nuptial tie.

"I have had," said she to her father, when next time he broached the subject of matrimony to her, "visions and revelations to the contrary; and the will of heaven I shall follow, even in preference to your wishes, best of earthly parents."

On this occasion, however, she avoided all al-

lusion to her scheme of founding and establishing the curious community of which mention has been made; nor were her plans so matured as to put her into a condition to explain herself fully or clearly on the subject. It was not until certain reconcilements and combinations had been concluded in her own mind that this could be done.

"Where am I to get the funds for founding the establishment? I have not oft required to consider," she would say to herself, laughing hysterically at the idea of forcing the impostors, Arnold and Crawford, to *do*. "But then, how am I to reconcile my conscience to this connexion? To take the means furnished by the robberies and the frauds of the miscreants for this holy purpose demands my consideration. I must consult heaven on the subject."

Well, having asked of the powers above advice

on this matter, Sophia Maxwell, like many other enthusiasts and fanatical people, very soon got that very sort of answer that was wanted; for in a vision of the night she had instructions to flitch from the villains monies that were sure to be otherwise most infamously applied; and so occupied and delighted was she with this answer that she seemed from morning to night, and day after day, like to a transported being, and actually demented.

It was now that the wine-merchant, who had come to maintain a very watchful eye over his daughter's manner and appearance, thought it necessary to call in the family physician, in order not merely to have his advice as to the state of her health, but to use his influence over the fair enthusiast with the view of having her to consent to a change of air, and to a temporary removal to some one of Mr. Maxwell's correspondents in the island of Madeira, a consumptive tendency, it being believed, characterising her state of health. The medical friend accordingly was called in, a serious conversation with Miss Maxwell having been pre-arranged.

"It is all in vain, my dear father," she said to the wine-merchant, when he first hinted the idea of consulting with the doctor in her presence;—"but still," she added, "I will satisfy you so far as to see him and to listen to him,—you agreeing that I shall be permitted to argue the case with the physician, and to enlighten him beyond what I imagine to be the state of his mind at this present time. Believe me," she subjoined with a fervour such as she had never before manifested to her parent,—quite alarming him,—"I have a work to perform and a voice to obey that no college of learned men have ever been favoured with."

The Doctor having been called in, Sophia, with an anticipatory dignity, commenced the discussion. She was in bed at the time—for it was an early hour in the morning, and her countenance was lit up like to one inspired and commissioned to deliver a new doctrine of mighty import.

"Well, doctor, you come to examine me concerning the state of my health?"—and she spoke these words with great sweetness:—"and to dispose of that point at once, I have to say, what I have repeatedly of late said to my father,—I never found my bodily frame in a sounder condition. As to my mind, however, it has been so closely occupied, relative besides to extraordinary matters, that the other part of my constitution has participated in the toil—the wear and tear. The consummation contemplated being near at hand, I shall then resume my wonted looks, and probably gain more than I have lost even in respect of appearance."

"The reciprocities," observed the doctor, "between the body and the mind are subtle and strong; and it is the duty of such as I am, to advise to such steps as will facilitate the most healthy of these reciprocities, both by working upon the mortal and the immortal part, by means of the simplest and the pleasantest methods. You admit, Miss Maxwell, that your physical frame has been affected by your mental exercises: let me now advise you to adopt steps by which the latter shall be benefited by the other; and I can name nothing that would be so effectual and agreeable,

as a change of air and scene,—as a short sojourn in another and blander climate."

"That, be assured, sir," said Sophia, rising in her style and bearing, "shall not, my limbs being at liberty, be the course with me; and moreover it would be sure speedily to kill me. I have, sir, a great and immediate mission for achievement in this country,—in this metropolis itself. Heaven has audibly ordered me to its performance, and visibly shown me the way."

"May I inquire, my young friend, what is to be the nature of this novel mission?" said the doctor.

"It is," answered the damsel with great promptitude and enthusiasm, "the founding of a new social religion, having for its principle and more immediate object the abjuration of as many women as will listen to and be swayed by me, of the nuptial tie. I shall have taught, preached and proclaimed aloud, that disgust with the world and the hatred of all men, except the parental and fraternal of one's own household, is the bounden duty of every damsel and maiden."

"What an unkindly and unloving code!" cried the man of medicine; "why, according to it, one's spiritual teacher as well as healer of the body would have to be hated."

"Hear him, ye spirits of the air that vouchsafe me your visits and counsel when I am laid on my pillow!" exclaimed the now highly excited girl; "he knoweth not that this anger and dislike are the love of justice, and that it is according to the rigours used by the prophets and apostles of old."

The doctor and the poor enthusiast's father interchanged looks of deep vexation, evidently expressive of their sentiments with regard to the state of her mind. Sophia, being as quick at interpretation as she was with regard to the power of swaying their most serious alarm, therefore at once proceeded to vindicate her doctrine, and to establish in her own way the veracity of her account with regard to the visions and revelations with which she was so singularly favoured.

"You think me crazed—mad—beside myself," cried she with her utmost emphasis; "but so was St. Paul accounted by the worldly wise of his day. Shall I not believe in that which I have seen and heard since the last setting of the sun, and before he again rose this morning? I tell you I had a vision in the darkness and silence of the gone night which re-assured me in all my preceding sentiments—it was the visitation of ethereal spirits, of seraphic beauty and sweetness, who spoke to me as with silver trumpets, encouragingly fanning me with their wings, so gloriously white and shining. Oh, yes! yonder they were in all their radiant beauty, and to my pillow they will again and again come down."

By this time the damsel's gestures and mien were those of a person who was in an ecstasy. She flung her arms aloft, her looks seemed to be piercing into the far distant heaven; and at the moment when the frenzy appeared to have reached its highest pitch, these words were the concordant utterance,—*"Hail! ye habitants of the skies,—bless me with your presence throughout the watches of the coming night, and I will speedily attend to your behests!"*

At the very same instant the doctor bethought

him of giving a more homely and practical turn to the scene, and immediately said, "You will pardon me, Miss Maxwell, for making so free, but I should really like to hear how you are to accomplish your object relative to your community of abjuring women. The thing cannot be established without money,—a large expenditure of money, and where are the funds?"

The man of medicine really thought he had now placed the damsel in a *fix*,—he took out his snuff-box, and with all the self-complacency of a person who thinks he has for ever shut the mouth of his antagonist in argumentative combat,—looking significantly around, and performing all the airs of an accomplished patron of Princes' Mixture, he waited for a reply; little aware that while Sophia was in a measure frenzied about one or two things, she was sensible and acute in regard to many more; and that, besides, her cunning was keeping equal pace with her craziness. It rather confounded the doctor, therefore, when she received what he considered a perfect clincher, to be met by her with a burst of good-natured laughter, and the following plain proposition:—

"If, my good friend," cried she, "you find that the filthy lucre to which you refer, comes freely and plentifully to my hands, without my troubling you, papa, or any one else for the same, will you not then admit that I have supernatural favours,—facilities, in short, which the searchers after the philosopher's stone never could reach? Come with papa to me this day week, and learn whether my challenge hath been unadvisedly offered. And then, should it so happen that on the day mentioned, and on as many other days afterwards as I may name, the *needful* is always supplied to me, according to the exact sum I shall have previously specified to you, will you any longer dare to remain a sceptic about my account of the supernatural agencies with which I profess to be favoured?"

"Why," answered the doctor, "facts, they say, are stubborn proofs; and when sums of money happen to constitute the burden of the fact, the case becomes the more striking. I shall wait with some impatience for the time that is to be the first test of the truth of your prediction. But what is the sum's amount that you are about to draw from your midnight visitant,—for it is to these serviceable agents, as I understand you, that you look for pecuniary aid:—in a word they are to be your bankers!"

"Call them by whatever name you choose, doctor, for this cannot in the slightest alter the case with me. Remember—a week hence."

Having so said, Sophia motioned her father and the physician to withdraw; and they left accordingly—as much at a loss as ever how to act, or what to think concerning the damsel's well-being and health.

To enable Miss Maxwell's fanaticism concerning the *abjuration* by a community of women to work at all, and its contemplated connection with a very questionable mode of raising the necessary pecuniary supplies for the support of the novel institution to be carried out, required that John Dimmock should be thoroughly instructed in the whole mystery and its ramifications. Accordingly, it was needful to the scheme to proselytize him, if possible, to her new doctrine and also to

some degree of faith in her accounts of holding frequent intercourse with supernatural agents; or if he could not be won over to a thorough credulity, at least it was indispensable that he should lend to her his most faithful and confidential services,—a result which she did not for a moment doubt of being readily obtained.

"John," said she, "I have a new scheme on foot, it being for the punishment not only of Arnold and Crawford,—in a way too that will be most galling to them, but for the advancement of the happiness of my own sex and the general interests of society. I am going to found a sort of convent for the reception of young women who take a vow never to wed; and whether this be a right principle or not, it pleases me to think how I can force the pair of impostors to support such an institution. You must help me—a thing you most effectually can do—in this undertaking."

"I do not very clearly understand your scheme," answered Dimmock,—“nor in so far as I can comprehend it, do I much approve of its principles. But be that as it may, this, Miss Maxwell, you may securely rely upon,—I shall serve you in whatever you require of me,—in the manner too, and at the time required.”

"You would not doubt, John," quoth the fair enthusiast, again bordering upon the subject of her extravagant fanaticism, "relative to the new lights which have set in upon my mind, were you a witness of such visions and visitations as I am favoured with at the dead hours of night, and when all the world around me is asleep."

"But I do not like midnight visitations, Miss Maxwell," cried Dimmock; "nor, I am persuaded, would you be troubled with them now, had you not been cruelly kept from your proper home on *that* night so distressing to us all."

"What know you of that night, man?" exclaimed the damsel, becoming fearfully agitated.

"Nothing but this,"—the man having grown familiar from the oft-repeated confidence reposed in him by his young mistress, and being also at heart won to her interests,—“that you have never seemed the same that you were before, since that severe winter night. You really must never venture far from your own door without me behind you: there will be no end to your dangers and distresses from the pair of impostors, and therefore be you most guarded. Why not give them over at once to their proper fate?”

"Because that course would be premature for my purposes with them, and especially the scheme that I have in my head. Besides, I have just learned by means of one of my peculiar channels, that they are still reaping, as if by a most agile sickle, an enormous harvest. We must have a share of it, which will be turned to beneficent ends. You must, John, get from the villains five hundred pounds in less than a week; it will not be the last that I shall filch from them if they pursue with a high and prosperous hand their past and present career."

"May I ask," John again inquired, "what is the precise use to which the first five hundred pounds is to be put?"

"To the building of a place in the neighbourhood of Pentonville, where my *abjuring* women are to have their head-quarters. Oh! is it not a grand idea to have the impostors so far imposed

upon as to be actually the patrons of the virtuous, and the upholders of a kind of nunnery? Their hearts will break with vexation. In the meanwhile, Dimmock, you must get the cash according to your own contrivance, and this time without my personal agency."

"I shall do my best, Miss Maxwell, and with you I glory in the novelty and the refinement of your scheme of torment."

CHAPTER XLVII.

When they next wake, all this derision,
Shall seem a dream, a d fruitless vision.

Mids. Night's Dream.

ALTHOUGH Sophia had intimated that Dimmock was to look after the cash, so far as the mere manner of getting it from the impostors was concerned, and, on this occasion without her own immediate personal appearance or agency, it was only in respect of the latter of these instructions that she kept her resolution. The damsel's mind was too eager relative to her new social scheme, as well as too constantly intent on annoying the villains, to leave the entire management of the present business to any other one's contrivance but her own: she must, in fact be the conductor, though not the conductor, of the exacting process.

Accordingly, she betook herself, as on sundry preceding occasions, to pen, ink, and paper,—addressing a note to Crawford, and another to Arnold. They ran in these terms,—the first being to the younger of the colleagues:—

"SIR,

"Tuesday Morning.

"You will be prepared to hand to my man, John Dimmock, who will deliver you this, *Two Hundred and Fifty Pounds*, to-morrow evening at the hour of eight, in front of the Royal Exchange. In a similar note to your tutor, Arnold, a hint will be found relative to the purpose for which I need and want the cash, not one farthing of it going into my pocket, or the pocket of any human creature personally known to me at this present moment. I have commanded Dimmock (the son of the enormously rich Fitzgerald) to give you this into your own hand, and I send two men along with him, in order not only to see that he performs his duty as I have instructed him, but that they may also be his assistants in taking you into custody, should you prove refractory. You will easily recognise them as having been of the number of my officers of justice when you received your deserved cooling in the waters of Father Thames not a hundred miles distance from Westminster Bridge.

"SOPHIA MAXWELL."

The note to Arnold named exactly the same sum for his required contribution, which was so peremptorily mentioned in the application to Crawford. The same intimations, too, were given to the arch-impostor, that had been addressed to his pupil with regard to the person who would hand to him her note, and the men who were to be witnesses both at the time when the note was delivered, and the hour when the cash would be paid. The hour of half-past eight was declared to be that when this part of the general scheme was to be conducted.

The following particulars were not mentioned in the communication to the younger of the colleagues:—

"You are to understand that I begin to receive lights and revelations from Heaven, and I have it in command to build a place for the education and protection of all

those young women who shall become my disciples in a new social religion. I have it also in command so far as I can interpret the mysterious hints of my midnight visitants, to exact the necessary monies from you and your associate in villany. You impose upon the world, I am to impose upon you. Assuredly you cannot complain when I do not ask, and shall not ask, above one third of your clear earnings, even after all your expenses of business, of agency, and of extravagant living are counted off. You, of course, will have an opportunity of seeing my note to the fellow Crawford, and he of reading yours. By the by, I had nearly overlooked a bright idea,—one, too, that I shall not put the other to any trouble about: you will be so good as to communicate to Sir George Morsey, that he will do me a kindness, should he let me have a *Hundred*. You yourself, Mr. Arnold, can bring it along with your own contribution; for I cannot doubt of the perfect ease with which you may make the request known to the baronet. I have only at present to add that all your secrets are safe from any desire on my part to have them divulged, and that nothing but unreasonable objections to my demands will suddenly expose you to the merited condign punishment. Now, allow me to subscribe myself, after informing you that you can scarcely perpetrate a villany without the entire circumstances becoming more or less known to me,—your determined tormenter till death,

"SOPHIA MAXWELL."

Miss Maxwell's ingenuities and unceasing modes of tormenting the pair of miscreants cannot be made fully known in our history, because they descended to so many labours and also minor studies, to such a variety of ramifications and strange agencies, that to go into every particular would be to prolong these pages out of all due proportion, and yet, perhaps, not to leave a stronger impression, after all, of her zeal, talent, and singular enthusiasm. It deserves, however, to be mentioned, that with her usual attention and observance, she had selected for her *officers of justice*, as she called them, fellows who either by herself, or by her active agent, John Dimmock, had been in a measure tested beforehand, as well as trained to the performance of their several parts.

A fitting illustration is to be found in the adoption of Donald Brock, a son of Caledonia; and o. Dick Martin, a Londoner by birth and breeding, at one time a jolly drayman, and afterwards a heavy porter in the employ of Mr. Maxwell,—as honest and blunt a fellow as "ever broke the world's bread," according to cockney phraseology, but discarded for habits of intemperance. Dick might be called a type of the tap-room swells,—Donald Brock, a Highlander by descent, but a son of Edinburgh according to his bringing up, was as perfect a specimen of the Scot, as might be met with in a day's march: forecasting and self-seeking, imbued with nationality and northern pride, yet intelligent, inquiring, moral in his habits, but extremely intent on becoming rich, that he might purchase an Inverness-shire estate, the small corner of ground in the vicinity of the capital of the country named, where he had first seen the light.

Well, these two worthies were, by the selection both of Miss Maxwell and her father's man, taken into the sort of secret service of the damsel, of which we have already heard so much; and admirably fitted they were to second the purposes and endeavours of the damsel and of Dimmock. Even in regard to personal aspect and acquired manners they were the exact thing for the purposes so eagerly contemplated by the merchant's daughter. Powerfully built, courageously minded, faithful to devotion and for any formidable ser-

vice, so long as well paid for it, and treated with respect, it would have been difficult when prompted by Sophia, and led by Dimmock, for the most skilled and unscrupulous prowler upon the town to have balked the party. There was a difference, to be sure, between the character, the attainments, and the tastes of the two—of the Londoner and of the offspring of the Land o' Cakes, of which we shall have opportunities of taking notice. In the meanwhile, suffice it that they, Dimmock, and the damsel, were all remarkably fitted for playing into one another's hands, the pair of assistants affording frequent occasions for the exercise of the young lady's speculation, curiosity, and questionings,—especially as she advanced in knowledge of the world, and towards the establishment of her house at Pentonville.

It was on a Tuesday morning, about the hour of genteel breakfasting, that Dimmock, Martin, and Brock drew near the residence of James Crawford,—the two latter in a sort of official dress, the former in a neat and butler-like garb, after having had an interesting interview with the mainspring of the party, the enterprising Sophia. The trio, headed by John, having rung the servants-bell, were instantly admitted to the very same apartment where they had so shortly before confronted, along with the dauntless young lady, the pair of drenched and fooled impostors. And who did they now see seated at the morning meal table but James himself and the experienced Mentor, Mr. Arnold, who, each just in the act of swallowing his coffee, instantly set down his cup, at the same moment, too, that both exclaimed,—“How dare you thus intrude? We are not to be daily abused by the like of you.”

“As to the abuse,” said Dimmock, “that is a point which requires some balancing; while as to the intrusion, you had better put it to these officers of justice by what authority it is that they obtrude their unpleasant presence before two such fine and independent gentlemen as are now before me, but not for the first, and most probably not for the last time.”

“Which of them shall I take?” cried Donald, advancing a step, as if for the purpose of instantly seizing the person. “Dinna ye think that it wad be as weel that I laid held of baith at once, if sae be that the gentlemen will na come of their ain gude pleasure?”

“Oh! that will be unnecessary,” answered Dimmock: “the delicate young creature, Miss Maxwell herself, is too much for the couple, even when they have come against her, prepared with the knife and the drug. They will not, I am certain, refuse to be guided by my advice, and that will save them a great deal of trouble, enabling them to finish their meal and many more meals, I trust, in peace and quietness.”

Having so said, to the production of a little free breathing to the breakfasting pair, John went close up first to the one and then to the other presenting to each a written note and whispering in their ears a word or two which, however simple, he knew would meet with the politest attention that instant.

Having perused the notes, and having laid their heads together for a second or two, Arnold at length said, throwing as much composure and suavity into his speech as he could possibly com-

mand,—for how cowardly and bitter doth guilt grow!—

“Remain in the lobby a few seconds, and we shall be immediately with you, acquiescing, I dare say, in your hard terms.”

Dimmock and Martin immediately turned to withdraw, but the cautious Brock first took the circuit of the room, as if to discover if there were any mode for the gentlemen to escape. Having, however, not observed any feasible way in which the impostors could elude them, he also repaired to the outside of the door, where in less than five minutes the colleagues made their appearance, the elder of them being foremost.

“We have thought,” said he, “that it will avoid trouble, waste of time, and, perhaps, angry encounter, if we make this morning serve for the transaction of the greater part of your business instead of to-morrow evening. With regard to Sir George Mornay, it will be necessary, however, that I inform him before-hand; and should he entrust me with what is demanded by Miss Maxwell, I shall appear with it at the time and place specified.”

Having so said, and done as mentioned, Dimmock and his men quitted the house and hurried back to the vicinity of Finsbury Square, elated beyond measure with the issue of their errand; and doubly rejoicing in the prospect of Miss Maxwell's reception of them. Nor did they exaggerate the nature of that reception.

“Here are five hundred pounds sterling for you,” cried Dimmock; “and yet we have not been absent above two or three hours! Another hundred, depend upon it, is forthcoming, obtained by Arnold from Sir George Mornay, on the morrow's evening in front of the Royal Exchange.”

“Bravely done, my men,” exclaimed Sophia, “my scheme promises gloriously. Since your departure I have had more heartening than ever from a *visitation*, nor shall you go unrewarded.”

Then like to one who was not only transported beyond her proper self, so as to trust to the grossest self-delusions, but to enter into familiar discourse with the men who were servilely obeying her,—going from one thing to another with a strange facility, pronouncing dictatorially on a variety of points, and at times acting the oracle with the most assured voice of prescience—stumbling, perhaps, with remarkable exactitude upon some of the extraordinary things which she predicted,—she thus spoke:—

“Go, meet the miscreant Arnold, my man Dimmock, for he will be at the appointed spot to meet you; and take my friends, Martin and the Scot,—they are of the right sort; and, mark my word, you will all three have need of your strength and of your spirit. A more daring attempt will be made than ever to pervert, if not to outrage you. I know it well,—I know it all,—I have had it all revealed unto me. Yet, let me see you all three shortly before the important meeting; for I shall have then something more to say. And till then, farewell.”

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Some, when the kids their dams too deeply drain,
With gags and muzzles their soft mouths res train.

DAYDEN.

ON the departure of Dimmock, Martin, and the Scotchman from Crawford's lodgings, with the five hundred pounds, the collegued impostors, as a matter of course, were most wroth, giving expression to the deepest imprecations and the most random vows of revenge. What could they indeed do but rehearse and recapitulate their former curses and blasphemies, plunging their souls into a deeper guilt, and absolutely reckless of the eternal retribution which they at times perceived, as if in an indefinite distance, would sooner or later be their fixed doom,—eager, it seemed, but to have their earthly triumph.

There was, however, some novelty of feature in this morning's views and resolves on the part of the colleagues,—at least a greater maturity and perception of system, as the following dialogue will show:—

"You see, James," said Arnold, "that the fiend herself has put her persecution and most extraordinary of connexions with us, upon an intelligible footing at any rate; for she becomes a sort of sleeping partner in so far as our profits are concerned. At the same time, according to our past and present gains, since she has begun to interfere with us, her claims, unless they become greatly more extortionate, do not exact the one clear third of which she speaks. Come, now, although it is most comical as well as serious, this same kind of partnership, yet it is better to have such a drag and diabolical drain than nothing to drain from; and since I become more clearly convinced on each of her exacting and tormenting occasions, that she has much stronger motives for continuing mute, than for proclaiming what she knows, let us act manfully, treating her abuse of us as an unavoidable evil, and in fact as an accessory which our speculations and schemes were liable to, in spite of all caution and foresight. Take our career, all in all, since you first looked upon the wretch, our success has been such as will yet be a world's wonder."

"I have always been telling you, Mr. Arnold," answered James, "that the she-devil's dread of her amour with me becoming a public story,—especially so as the scandal might reach the ears of her father, is about equivalent to her desire to torment and to ruin you and me; and now you observe from her own hand-writing and schemes, that she has a deep personal interest and piece of pride to be most essentially served through our fair standing with the world."

"So much for our footing and system," observed the elder of the gentlemen; "but now to consider for a moment the statement which she puts forth,—too strongly corroborated by her interferences, as we have found it to our cost,—that she has a knowledge, more or less complete, of all our transactions. Do you not find from her note to myself, that she lays claim to the miraculous favour of having revelations and lights from Heaven,—that, in fact, she has supernatural visions and visitants,"

Having so said, Arnold laughed immoderately, infecting James much in the same manner.

"This is the most promising feature in the whole of the matter, as we now stand," said Crawford. "I told you that I should craze and madden her,—that I should drive the mind out of her, which is the meaning, as I take it, of the common phrase, of a person being *beside himself*. She is going fast, believe me. Damn her,—would that we could speed the process! Is there no mode?—no plan such as our once fertile brains would assuredly have easily devised. I swear that it annoys and confounds me almost more than all the other parts of her persecution, to think that a weak, frail, and amorous girl should triumph over us,—over you, my friend! Really, if the world should ever, in future times, become acquainted with the whole of our story and lives, and with Maxwell's daughter's victories in spite of us, I fear and foresee that we shall figure secondarily in the tale."

The pair of worthies both paused for some time, keeping mute and abstracted, as if beating about for an idea,—and endeavouring to stimulate their inventive faculties. But the most experienced, subtle, and unscrupulous contriver, is nothing better than a bungler, if he endeavour to perform impossibilities. Little better chance is there for the schemer when he is so beset on each side, who in order to effect an escape, has to encounter barriers over which it is not in his power to vault, or is sure of arousing an antagonism that is more potent than himself.

While Sophia lived, and had the use of her reason to any extent,—nay, so long as John Dimmock existed and continued in her interest,—Arnold and Crawford could not but feel it to be as clear as a mathematical demonstration, that they were daily and hourly at their mercy. To get rid therefore of the one, and to buy over the other, most doubtful as the issue of any such attempt must be, and most desperate the head and heart which contemplated their practicability,—still these were the only conceivable and possible means of delivering themselves.

"To get rid of the fiend," cried Crawford, "can only be done by murdering her or by so grossly using her as to bring on irremediable insanity, madness, or idiocy. The last I should like best; and, indeed, according to my narrowed studies, and slight knowledge of the human constitution, physical and intellectual, it is the result that is most probable. Well, then, how shall we obtain an opportunity of doing something of the nature indicated? Could I but get her snared, or noosed, or muzzled, so as to have her within my power, in another Gower Street, the thing would to a dead certainty be achieved!"

"You know," cried Arnold, "I am commanded by the wretch to give an intimation to Sir George Mornay, in order that he may fork out one hundred pounds for the damsel's use; and that if the money be obtained, I am to hand it over to Dimmock, or probably herself, as I think is more likely, in the presence of Dimmock or others. Now, whether Sir George will submit to such a dictation and exaction, it is not for me to say; or how it is that he is at the fiend's mercy, it is needless at present to inquire. However, whether he hands me over the hundred pounds or not, suppose that you and I repair to the

Royal Exchange at the appointed hour. Who knows what may cast up, or what favourable opportunity for our ready wits to manifest themselves, may occur? I should at least endeavour to make one other attempt upon the cupidity of the fellow Dimmock. If money,—and I have no doubt, from the nature of those he is sprung from, and also of the former course of his life, but the thing is to be done,—if money, I say, can buy him, or the equivalents of money, why, surely we can outbid the wine-merchant's daughter? We have, perhaps, erred in falling short of the proper mark hitherto. We must not stickle, James."

"But suppose," interjected Crawford, "that we cannot purchase the blackguard, we have then only to practise upon his diabolical instigator some daring outrage. But how?—this is the query and the difficulty."

"Could we but gag her, as I have known to be done with the quickness of lightning in the crowded streets of London,—the fiend instantly after being whisked into a brothel, you might react your late part, James, in Gower Street,—achieving thus every thing you contemplate, or hurrying to that issue. The wretch, we may feel sure, would never, for her own sake, blab,—nay, her story would never afterwards be trusted, seeing that we could so easily adduce evidence of her passing a night with you on a former occasion elsewhere. Yes, gagging,—or if not this method, so plastering her visage that she might be carried lifeless to a dissecting-room,—would be better to me than the joys of their fabled heavens."

Leaving the monsters of iniquity thus to contrive and thus to gloat their souls and fancies, we return to the vicinity of Finsbury Square, and to the dwelling of the wine-merchant,—the really worthy Mr. Maxwell, who happened at this period to be so busy in looking out for a second wife, that he sadly neglected his dear daughter.

We left Sophia, wishing her three agents a cordial farewell,—having intimated her anxiety to see them all again before the appointed meeting with Arnold in front of the Royal Exchange. The men had not closed the door behind them before the damsel was persuading herself that she clearly foresaw every thing that was to occur on the occasion. Already had she predicted something requiring all the strength and strenuousness of her servants; but now, without departing far from this conjectured result, her eager curiosity prompted the notion that she must in some way figure in the scene. Having come to this conclusion,—thinking, as had now become habitual to her excitements and enthusiasm, that the idea had been voiced by something supernatural to her,—she at once began to contrive in her turn, how she might most surely and successfully further entrap the villainous colleagues.

"Arnold will make his appearance at the exact hour, with the hundred pounds," said Sophia to herself,—“and in all probability Crawford will be with or near to him,—perhaps other ruffians, to assist him in a violent onset. So far, so good. What next? Oh! they will conjecture that ‘the meddling fiend’ is in the neighbourhood; and most likely assuming great frankness towards my men,—Dimmock particularly,—they will inquire concerning me. What then?”

Sophia paused at times during this self-discourse with her own imaginings and feelings,—her voice and tones frequently seeming to come from two different speakers.

"Yes, what then?" she again proceeded. "Ah! I have it! Dimmock alone must make his appearance, while Martin and the Scotchman hide close by. If they do make overtures to John, he can answer as he chooseth; but when they come to speak of me, he must tell them the truth,—that is, he must inform them where I am waiting, and then, as the parties separate, all my three agents, by a circuitous passage, must hurry to my rescue; for as sure as that they learn I am close at hand, they will hasten to the spot in hopes of finding me unprotected."

Sophia again paused in her soliloquy, and again deeply cogitated; striving to penetrate with her mental or spiritual vision the events of the contemplated meeting. What if she had been imbued with such a belief in animal magnetism as has prevailed at a more recent era?

"They will discover that I at this moment am alone, and unguarded. What then? Will it be the thrust of a knife, or the mere blow of the murderous fist? No, for such things have been revealed to me as require that I should retain existence for a long period. "I do not," she cried aloud, in the solitude of her chamber, "fear them,—they cannot hurt me; only let them make the attempt, and then out and upon them, my men, Dimmock, the Londoner, and the Scot,—but slay them ye must not, only maim and wound them i. ye can; I shall after that quickly exact my share in the profits of their business speculations."

Such were Sophia's pre-arrangements and conjecturings before the appearance of her three agents to receive her final instructions. Nor altogether unworthy was the discourse of the men, shortly before their going before the young lady, bearing as that discourse did upon the business they had in hand, and the character of their interesting employer.

"She really is a strange body, that young mistress of yours, Mr. Dimmock; I canna say that I wad like her service, man. The truth is as clear as day to me that she's getting demented,—she's half daft already, and some day she may tak' it intil her daft head to play you a pretty plishy."

"The idea of a Scotchman saying that he would n't like the service of ever a one," roared Martin, "puts me out, John Dimmock, if so be that the service were easy and the pay heavy. I'll be hanged if I should fancy to be of your beggarly country, Brock, were it nought other than that I should be ashamed of my oatmeal porridge and my shabby pride;" and Martin laughed uproariously at what he conceived his strong thrusts and heavy hits; swallowing a pot of brown stout the while, a lump of bread and meat before him, which had just been sustaining the attack of an agile large bladed pocket-knife.

"My gude friend Martin," observed Brock, "ye are always tryin' to be deivish sair upon me, and yet ye canna mak' me angry; and just because my pity to see sae mickle effort made compared wi' the little that ye can do, when ye do your best, overcomes whatever offence I might tak' at knowing your willingness to hurt. I declare, it is a pity to behold sic a great hulking

fellow as you, wha mak' a perfect god o' your belly, bouncing and bellowing sae loud, and devil a feather's weight o' intelligence about you after a'."

"What, ye rascally Scotchman, to call me 'a fellow!' what mean you by that, I should like to know?" cried the ex-drayman and heavy-porter, striking the table with shoulder of mutton fists,—swearing he would pull the white liver out of the savage,—and making to rise in the meanwhile practically to prove what he asseverated he was to do.

"I meant naething but what I said, man," answered the Scot, affecting to be altogether unruffled and master of his temper, "just keep your seat—it will be best; for surely you and I are friens, and never had reason to be any thing but friens. Reason, man, is a fine thing, and unco manly at the same time."

Dimmock, who had listened to the wrangle,—which had been renewed again and again in the course of his late association with the Londoner and the Caledonian,—with some degree of impatience, yet not altogether unentertained, now interfered.

"It is about time," said he, "that we attend to my excellent young mistress. There will occur other opportunities for you two to try your strength, whether it is in argument or wit,—temper or power of arm. I may, however, just remark that I think it would be a simple matter for any man, English, Irish, or Scotch, who has seen anything considerable of life, and who has made a tolerable good use of the powers which have been given him, to silence you both, and to satisfy an impartial hearer, that the one is about as far from taking a pleasant way, at least for a mixed and general company, as the other."

"Aweel, Mr. Dimmock, I canna gainsay you, when ye observe that it is time for us to attend to your young lady's business; but as soon as that is over, and ye have an opportunity of chatting an hour with me, maybe, I'll show you that the greater quantity of your middle-gangin' people, who never tak' ae decided part nor anither, are mere milk-and-water bodies, wha, if they do nae great harm, never happen by any chance to do a positive gude, just standing in the way o' sensible and energetic folks, and being——"

"Really, Donald Brock, there seems to be no other method of getting done with your jaw than to rise and leave your company. Are you or are you not going to attend to Miss Maxwell's affairs?—tell me at once, and then I shall know what to report to her. I dare say Martin and I can do very well without your assistance."

"Dinna, man, be sae fast, Mr. Dimmock,—there is nae the slightest occasion for any misunderstanding amongst us. I was only just going to observe that——"

"Come on, Martin," cried Dimmock, "I shall have no more of this;—and so saying, John and the Londoner strode towards the apartment where they were to meet Miss Maxwell, immediately previous to their starting for the Royal Exchange.

Donald Brock, however, was as soon in the presence of the damsel as the other two, at the same time that he seemed far more alive to the importance and points of the office they were to go through than the ex-heavy porter and drayman.

Even Dimmock might have appeared to some disadvantage if compared with Donald, with all the Englishman's fair talents, education, and larger diversity of experience, had he measured his argumentation with the Scot on any subject where principles were involved and a close adherence to the points started and at issue was to be observed.

John, however, had this peculiar advantage over both of the others, that he had for a considerable period been in a course of genteel training, had many inducements for studying the proprieties, and felt himself in a responsible situation. There was no little cause likewise for an elevating pride in being the confidant of a lovely young lady in matters of extreme delicacy and great importance. All these things lent him a gravity and an apparent wisdom beyond his real attainments.

"Heh, sirs," said Donald to himself, "what a thing it is this little brief authority! How big it seemeth to mak' a man, though he be in reality but of middling stature, or maybe, positively sma'; but at the present we maun let that fie stick to the wa'. Haud your tongue, Donald; but be clear-sighted and watchfu'."

Having received their instructions from Sophia, and her own course being to follow very nearly that which we have already had outlined to us by her,—the party started for the Royal Exchange; Dimmock alone stationing himself at the precise spot as appointed, while Martin and the Scot hid themselves in a neighbouring corner, and Sophia betook herself to an alley a little way further off. Dimmock had not waited ten minutes when he thought he descried in the distance by means of a bright lamp in front of the Mansion-house, two figures resembling Arnold and Crawford: a few seconds after the elder of the colleagues was by his side, and prompt for business.

"It is just as we expected," said Arnold; "you are as punctual as usual, Dimmock; nor with me can you find fault. I have the hundred pounds demanded of Sir George Mornay, and will instantly hand the sum over to you; but I thought there were to be witnessers to the transaction. Why is not Miss Maxwell here herself? And how am I to know that the money will ever reach her? You must be well aware, Mr. Dimmock, that neither James Crawford nor myself have much reason to put faith in you."

"Why, as to the last point,—that is, the matter of faith and the grounds for withholding it,—I cannot help it, if I find the treatment of me by others to be far more liberal and generous than yours has as yet been," said Dimmock; "while as regards Miss Maxwell, although she is at no great distance from us at this moment I myself think it is prudent in her to be watchful, lest you should at last manage to make some of your threats good. But, at all events I have it in command from her to receive the money and shortly afterwards to deliver it up to her, or, should you object to such manner of payment, to inform her of the fact. In that case, I believe, she will not renew the particular demand, but deal with the baronet in another and an equally authoritative style."

"Oh!" said Arnold, "I have no wish to put either you or her, any more than myself, to needless trouble. There, take the money; I have per-



formed my part and shall begone, unless you have some proposition to make to me, Dimmock."

"I think any proposition you may contemplate, sir," observed John, "would best come from yourself: you should deal with my fellow-servant, the Scotchman, who figured so officiously when you and your young friend with such readiness handed over to the young lady the round sum of five hundred pounds."

Here Dimmock laughed aloud, as if in wonder and contempt of their pusillanimity.

He soon, however, resumed his discourse.

"How that five hundred pounds made my mouth water!" said he. "It is a pretty sum, and sounds, when named, so well. I wonder what would make me part with five hundred sovereigns! Not even the sight of the gibbet."

"Did Miss Maxwell never give nor promise

you five hundred pounds, Mr. Dimmock?" eagerly inquired Arnold.

John looked the questioner so suddenly through, and seemingly with such an astounded meaning, as if to say, "Are you in joke or in banter?" He then spoke out thus:—"A good many five-pound notes I have had of her,—indeed one every time I serve her in troubling you or Mr. Crawford; but was I to let her suppose that I looked for five hundred, the little tyrant would very soon give me the sack."

"What would you do for me, Mr. Dimmock, were I on an early day to let you have such a handsome present?" demanded Arnold.

"I will not be joked with, sir," answered the sly and faithful servant. "I am well aware that you cannot trust to me, for you did not go rightly about the business with me at the first. You

should try the Scotchman, I tell you; he is to be bought over at a different price from that which I would stand up for, now that I am far from needy and about to start in business, perhaps, in another country for myself."

"When or where could I fall in with the Scot?" inquired the villain, putting into John's palm five guineas, as he uttered the question.

"Almost any time and anywhere," said Dimmock: "he is about to leave the service of the Maxwells."

"Would he enter Crawford's service or mine, do you think?" was the miscreant's next query.

"Why, that will depend, I should suppose," replied the wily agent of the enthusiastic Sophia; "he who pays most for the least done, and offers the best chance for Donald Brock speedily realising as much money as would purchase a few Highland acres,—the *estate*, as he is everlastingly calling it, upon which he was born,—would be sure to win him over."

"If you will meet me at this spot to-morrow evening and at this same hour, bringing with you Donald Brock, as I think you called him, I shall give each of you something worth your coming. And now I must bid you adieu for the present, for I should suppose your young mistress thinks you remain away too long."

"Let her think as she pleases," said Dimmock sharply; "am I always to be dancing at her beck to the minute ordered? I mean to have a hearty glass first, in order to drink towards your health, Mr. Arnold. After that I shall to the alley *there*," with the shake of his head distinctly indicating where she stood,—"*where I left her, in order to accompany her back to her father's. Good night, sir, and thank you for me.*"

Having thus spoken, John ran eastward, and not in the direction of the alley,—soon, however, coming to a halt that he might discern the way that Arnold had taken. This was westward and towards the Mansion-house—of course, Dimmock concluded, to apprise Crawford of the spot where Sophia had been left. John, therefore, struck directly towards the right, and in a minute or two was alongside of his young mistress.

"They will be with you, Miss Maxwell, in a few seconds," said John; "have courage—fear not. Do not cry nor give the alarm; neither do you resist much if they endeavour to drag you away: we shall speedily be upon them. But where are Martin and Brock?"

"Yonder," whispered Sophia; "I was talking with them five minutes ago. Yonder," she added, pointing the men out to him.

"I see! I see!" answered Dimmock; and a moment after the three were grouped in the shaded corner.

Did poor Sophia tremble, when thus abandoned for a short space, and left to be assailed by a pair of ruffians, who thirsted for her very life's blood? We cannot distinctly say how she felt or what passed within her: but this much may be told, that she predicted not very wide of the truth when she prophesied that the meeting with the miscreants on that occasion, would require both strength of courage and of arm.

Surely, above all, it was a terrible risk to which she exposed herself!

"What is that, think you, Mr. Dimmock?"

softly inquired the Scot, enconcealed, as the trio were, in the obscurity of a corner that commanded a view of the greater part of the alley.

"It is the villain Crawford approaching our young lady like a fox, or rather the serpent," said John; "I wonder if she has yet observed him?"

"Observed him!" said Martin; "why she has not seen him at all! I shan't wait till she has seen him, the cowardly willain."

"Hold!" whispered the other two; "do not spoil sport."

"I can see no sport in it," said the ex-drayman; "if they hurt her I shall ne'er forgive myself, as sure as my name is Martin. Oh! the feller has gone back."

"Yes, but who now joins them, think ye?" whisperingly exclaimed Dimmock. "Oh! I know him well, for he it is with whom I have been talking a few minutes ago. But now he is cloaked; in fact they are both muffled in cloaks! They again approach her, her back being towards them; and she seems to be looking at the stars."

"The stars!" observed the Scot; "we ken she looks upward for her visions."

"Silence!" whispered Dimmock, with a fearful eagerness. "Oh! how I should like to send a bullet through each of the spoilers. See! they divide!—they approach—one on each side, the poor young lady standing stock-still, continuing her upward and apparently star-struck gaze! By heaven! they have both sprung at once upon her! She seems to be in the hands of ferocious beasts! What is that they have done? By all that's sacred, they have gagged her: and they drag her towards yonder hackney coach! Now my friends, out and upon the ravishers: I must for future ends, if possible, keep out of sight."

"It is terribly but righteously done," he exclaimed, a few moments afterwards, when he beheld each of the spoilers snatched and dashed against the walls of the alley; a tremendous blow in the region of the heart being dealt by each of John's friends to their appropriated victims. "But why has my lovely young lady fallen to the ground?" And dreading lest she had been foully murdered, he sprang to her assistance.

"Alas! she bleeds—her mouth is torn sadly!" cried John, taking the gag from between her beautiful teeth, which had escaped uninjured by the ruffians' violence, although her tongue was somewhat lacerated. Away with her in his arms to the first spot for unobserved examination, he hurried, followed by his two assistants, they having made off from the chastised ruffians, who had not yet been able to gather themselves to their feet.

Sophia was more stupefied with the violence used towards her than dangerously hurt; and on her return home, a little water soon effaced the stains of the blood from her countenance.

But what could erase from her heart the impression produced by this new attempt at violence on the part of her implacable enemies?

CHAPTER XLIX.

What numbers of Proselytes may we not expect?

ADDISON.

WE have already intimated that the injury done to poor unfortunate Sophia's person and face by the ruffian attack in the alley, was, after all, of such a trifling nature, and so transient in its effects, that the story to her father of being suffering from toothache passed off sufficiently well for the good easy gentleman. We have applied the terms *poor* and *unfortunate* to Mr. Maxwell's daughter, for truly might she be so designated—seeing that from her first hapless acquaintanceship with the apt pupil of the unparalleled Arnold, she had continued ever after to rush or to be driven into troubles,—many and extraordinary, till at length her mind was injuriously touched—lacerated, we should say, and permanently wounded.

We have no intention of exhibiting Sophia Maxwell as spotlessly perfect. Nay, we have from the first shown her as frail and faulty. It would be an immoral departure from nature and truth to suppose that with her defective, and in many senses, perverted training, she could be an instance of uniform accuracy and right conduct.

No—we wish as an instructive lesson, to put her forward as one of the human kind, fully as ready to go wrong as to go right; and of a piece with all this was her adoption of a principle, *that to do a little wrong in order to accomplish a great good*, was in the proper direction of feeling and conduct. Accordingly, she resorted to *white lies*, as she called the misrepresentations, and, with her usual ingenuity, not only trucked up a story of her own about the injuries and the attempted injuries offered to her person, but erected a species of philosophy most curious and characteristic in itself.

"I shall," said she, "make some one carry forth a pack of nonsense to the villains. I have dealt with them in the serious and the serio-comic mood: now it shall be in the tragic burlesque."

Sophia took pen in hand—Sophia aped the philosopher, and with a mixture of wisdom and random ethics, she thus delivered herself:—

"Suppose that the ruffians had marred my natural looks! What then? Not half so bad to be made frightful to the natural sight, as to have the soul insulted and torn! Oh! there is no comparison between the delirium and obliviousness of mind which I experienced after the outrage in Gower Street, and the attempt upon my poor mouth in the alley. But I shall trump up a tale to frighten the guilty withal?"

Sophia commenced essayist as well as fabricator, and thus put pen to paper:—

"Imagine that I had had my visage destroyed by the monsters! What then? A woman's face is her dower in many instances,—in many instances her terrible curse and saddest doom. Suppose a shocking havoc had been perpetrated upon my countenance, and that my features had been wrenched into ugliness—who, of my sex would have encountered this, and yet endured to live? Not to be able to pass or to make use of the commonest mirror, without being startled and made to shudder at the frightful transformation, and hourly to have the recollections of the past admiration and the delightful complacency of the eyes of the old and young turned to you, instead of the reluctance which makes the expression of the gazer's at-

tention, and perhaps the degree of loathing that may follow! Oh! it is no easy thing to bear up against all that I have endured, luckless damsel that I am! Fain could I be, I almost fancy, to lay me down and die rather than encounter all these troubles, miseries, and toils."

It was not an uninteresting contrast to these reasonings to find the essayist discoursing of the reliefs—almost the compensations—that might attend the destruction of one's beauty and loveliness; for Sophia had begun, though certainly with a fanatical belief and enthusiasm, to regard other objects—those of an intellectual and spiritual nature—as of paramount importance.

She did not, to be sure, take a correct view of the moral and the mental world, nor of the subjects which she more particularly attended to, coming within the compass of these terms. Still it was to the essentially imperishable, and to the immaterial that she now chiefly addressed her thoughts, sometimes even going the length of being glad at the idea of the features of *wax-doll* character, as she named them, being spoiled, forcing her to the culture of the undying and the unfading.

There were two very observable results traceable to the outrage upon the wine-merchant's daughter, perpetrated in the vicinity of the Royal Exchange.

The first of these has just now been referred to, leading to a more and more passionate desire to create, to muster, and to augment the number of proselytes to her new social system, of which some mention has already been made, and of which, by her mind's eye, she had such an extravagant foresight.

The other was of the nature which was to be looked for from her bygone behaviour. A more resolute and terrible persecution of the impostors, Arnold and Crawford, was to be set on foot; and the first symptom of this determined and studiously crushing treatment, was her calling in a portrait-painter, and making him represent her in a most outrageously deformed condition.

The portrait having been finished and framed, her next step was to send it by a street-porter to Crawford's abode, where she knew Arnold was often to be met with.

Nor was the picture of the countenance, after its professed distortion, the only specimen of the limner's art which was entrusted to the porter for delivery,—for a lovely piece accompanied the other subject, such as had prompted the happiest genius to exert his talents, skill, and taste to the utmost. It was the portrait of the same damsel taken some twelve months before, when she was in the purest radiance of her beauty, and before sorrow, remorse, and cruelty affected her charms.

"Let the monsters be shown these two pictures," cried the interesting Sophia Maxwell: "command them to look at *this* and then at *that*,—exactng from them an opinion,—I care not how hypocritical or false it be,—but still words in the shape of a judgment, saying what is the return that ought to be required for the terrible injury they have done my poor visage, and also the recompense for the far more appalling wrong which they intended to perpetrate."

Poor Sophia here paused, almost breathless from agitation and crowding memories: at length she thus talked to herself:—

"Perhaps they may defy my messenger and

scoff at my representations. It matters not much: I shall have my revenge redoubled,—I shall address them in terms that will astound them;”—and she again put pen to paper in these words:—

"MURDERERS AND ROBBERS,

"As these are possibly the last lines that I shall ever offer you, or address to you, by my own pen, I wish you now to understand that all compromise between us from henceforth ceaseth, unless, indeed, your fears extort from you a good portion of those great and monstrous gains which you have been barefacedly extorting from many others. Time was, and that down till lately, when the dread of my own exposure, and especially to my good and too indulgent father, made me about as fearful on account of my own interests and feelings as I have been resolute on your ruin. The time is gone, I repeat, for this balancing of terms and interests; for I have had revealed to me that there shall be more honour and virtue in avowing the whole truth regarding my own sins, than pain: it will be in the service of truth, and truth shall prevail. I tell you there is but one way to keep my mouth shut; I know you understand me. Come not up to my expectations, and you have not a day to live out of the cells of the prison-house. 'How shall we compute,' you may ask, 'what her expectations are?' I will show you how easily it may be done. I send for your examination two portraits of my poor self, taken at not very remote but at exceedingly different periods of my life. It is for you to estimate the amount of the difference from the innocent blooming girl to the gully, fallen, misled, and hideous creature that I now am, and must ever continue till the grave shrouds me from the gaze of the world and the pollution of such monsters as you. My man, whom I send with these picture-pieces, will repeat parts of what I have said, and perhaps a good deal more. It requires me but a few days or only a few hours of my time, now grown exceedingly precious,—having a grand mission to execute, and a great work of proselytism to perform,—to utterly engulf you, which I shall do without a scruple, the moment I find you reluctant or tardy to repay to me something for the damage I have sustained at your flagitious hands.

"SOPHIA MAXWELL."

To this touching letter,—and not the less touching that it was tinged with the poor writer's recent phantasies,—accompanied as it was by the talk and the formidable presence of Sophia's sturdy agent, the wretched Arnold and Crawford could do nothing but return answers professing penitence, asking for forgiveness, and declaring to the man before whom they tremblingly stood, that they were at the mercy of the wronged lady.

"What sum do you name as fit to measure the difference between her who sate for the first and her who sate for the last of these portraits, if indeed money can estimate the change?"

"A thousand pounds," cried Crawford, "is all that we can offer: if that be not accepted, I, for one, shall never more be a party in any arrangement with her who sent you hither; and so let her do her worst."

"What says Mr. Arnold," the man next inquired, "is the sum that he would proffer for the furtherance of Miss Maxwell's benevolent enterprise and charitable institution, rather than that he should be forced to bring into James Crawford's presence the Sir George Mornay, of whom Miss Maxwell declares she has heard so much?"

"Let Miss Maxwell name the terms herself, and when these are made known to me I shall have an answer ready for her," said Arnold.

"I depart in the meantime," said the man, "with your several answers."

The colleagues breathed a little more freely; but still they waited in strong expectation of Sophia's answer, and with an awful solicitude. At length

that return was made, in some measure re-encouraging them; for it amounted to this, that she would not in the meanwhile demand any thing farther than what had been offered, and that for a time, she could not say how long or how short, she would not obtrude herself or her agents upon them.

And what was the aspect of the bodily condition of the veteran in crime, and his most teachable pupil? Why, two more wretched creatures could not have been picked out of the purlieus of the vilest dens of depravity in London, even although their dress and household condition were prepossessing. They were sick and dejected, plastered and bandaged. Dreadful had been their punishment in the alley; yet so self-abandoned and conscious of being wholly unpitied were they, that they uttered not a word about their sufferings or the usage they had sustained.

Horrible state!

Who would not have thought Sophia Maxwell's case infinitely preferable to that of these men, over head and ears in crime?

But we must now go back again to the merchant's daughter, and her *abjuring* sisterhood, being a theme, although offering pitiable passages at times, yet furnishing much to interest, had there been nothing more about it than exhibiting to us a most singular young woman, in some of the most singular of situations,—outstripping even what the romancist's imagination has pictured or concocted, and bequeathing valuable lessons in sundry ways.

It was not the least curious circumstance in the tumultuous history of Sophia Maxwell, that she took a fancy towards Donald Brock in this particular way,—different, you observe, from the friendship and confidence which she exhibited in favour of Dimmock,—that she appointed him, the time-serving and sly fellow, to be her first man and agent in the business of making, confirming, *building-up*, as she named it, the novices who were to constitute her college of *abjurers*.

"Go," said she to the canny Scot, "and see if thou canst get any damsel to understand and to join us. Go to the meanest and the least thought-of lanes of this great Babylon, and call in whatever maidens thou mayest think likely to be of my mind,—that is, to entertain a single purpose of doing good to all, but of remaining untainted with the vices of men and of the broad world's vanities."

"I dinna clearly understan' you, Miss Maxwell," said Donald; "although, I'm sure that I'll execute your will to the best of my knowledge. Do ye wish that we should hae, as they hae in various places o' Bermondsey, a house for a parcel of idle and mostly ugly lassies, that tak' to religion when there's naething else left for them? or do you mean that we shall attempt a great reformation, like that o' the time o' Johnny Knox, when he said,—pu'ing down the monasteries, the cathedrals, and the abbeys,—'the only way to get rid of the rooks was to destroy their nests?' I wish to be clearly informed o' your principles as weel as o' your practices."

"I wish, Donald," answered the sweet and lovely damsel,—more beautiful now from a certain intelligence in her eye and air, and a face so lily-white that you could not have told it from

the softest, most delicate, and inviting surface that ever nature put on,—“I wish to have two sorts of disciples: the first the wronged, like myself; and, secondly, the reasoning.”

“The wronged! Miss Maxwell? I am sure that a happier need not be sought for than what you might be. A wine-merchant’s daughter! my certes! and naething to trouble you but a few whigmeleerie notions about the men and a’ that! I’m astonished! I wad hae naething to do with them, but gang directly on in the auld fashioned way o’ thinking, and let the new fangled folks gang their way.”

“Donald, you are so worldly-minded,—so calculating and forecasting, that I hardly think it safe to trust you. I had been considering of a way to benefit you, but you will not be benefitted. I was going to appoint you the secretary of my new college, and with means to boot. Yet unless you can exert yourself to some purpose, and bring me sundry subjects to talk with, I had better engage some one else, although I really did fancy that you were so particularly gifted that you might discern spirits and be serviceable to me.”

“My leddy, I think the best thing we can do, will be to get widows, or ill-used wives, or lassies that hae been disappointed, the uglier the better; and were it nought else, the story and back-looking days of each will be a fine study for you and me, seeing that to the mind’s kingdom of thought and experience the fate of each will guide us.”

“Donald, you are now coming round in some degree to my mode of thinking: you can rise to the doctrine of destiny and of the reality of supernatural visitation, and therefore I am going to tell you, not only how you can serve the public good and myself, but establish a new social order; and that is to be through the agencies which I have named and which I contemplate. You must bring to me a harvest of novices, prepared for the rite of *abjuration*.”

Donald promised faithfully to attend to his young mistress’s sentiments and instructions, but desired an hour to consider in what direction he should turn his face, and to what particular classes he should address himself.

“Oh!” cried Sophia, “gather in! There will be no end to our disciples. I shall have such an array of them, as that in procession he who marketh the first shall not be able to mark the last in the line.”

“Poor girl!” said Donald, as he quitted the presence of the unfortunate and now half crazed Sophia; “I shall obey thee, for I like thee throughout the strangest conditions. Yet, heaven willing, I shall bring thee back to thy proper self. What!” exclaimed he, as if touched by sudden inspiration,—“what if she should yet be my wife, and brought to be a *douce*, sensible, and thrifty woman!”

CHAPTER L.

The mines are not more precious than are the treasures of that man who hath a wise adviser.

MYDDLETON.

It was, perhaps, a proof of Miss Maxwell’s acuteness and sagacity that she selected from among the three agents whom she had latterly employed

in her secret service, the *canny* Scot for the particular department which she had now come to regard as the great object of her life.

“Donald Brock,” said she, “is just the sort of man for my purpose,—intelligent,—lively,—honest, too, I am persuaded; so long at least, as it is for his own interest to be so,—time-serving, and altogether inclined to be of use to me.”

Sophia had, with the nice discernment of woman, clearly discovered that the Scot felt greatly flattered by her selection of him for the particular purpose which she contemplated, and also that nothing pleased him more than to be holding converse with her.

“The sleek and cunning fellow,” she remarked, “is a great talker; but above all he delights to discourse with myself. How his great gooseberry eyes keep fixed upon mine: I should not wonder but that he thinks me pretty.”

It was as the damsel said; for Donald from the first did speak of her as a beauty, and the longer he continued on terms of familiarity with her, the greater grew his admiration. In short, he fell over head and ears in love with her,—having often been heard to say, “I wad tak’ her for better or for worse at ae minute’s notice at any time, sic an enticin’ creature is she. The only pity is that she is so flighty and superstitious. I’m jealousing that her head is a bit turned. My certes! if she were mine, either as daughter or spouse, I wad drive sic nonsense out o’ her brains. Howsomever as she is neither the ane nor the tither, it behoves me to do my best to serve her, and this will aiblins be by doing her pleasure in a’ things. We shall see.”

Donald, conjectured aright that the greatest service that he could perform for the young lady, according to her own first estimate, would be to please and obey her in every thing; but as he seldom or never let her propose to him the execution of any office or duty, without canvassing more or less its merits and importance, he sometimes succeeded in considerably modifying her original design, and even to make her perceive its unsound principles and the dangerous consequences to which it would inevitably conduct. He would pertinaciously argue a point with her, at times to her great amusement,—at others to the excitement of her anger; and when such was the unpleasant result, Donald exerted no mean power of allaying the passion, when he would turn his mastery to the best account, by exacting a more unequivocal admission of error than at the starting was contemplated.

There were occasions, however, when he felt sure the young lady was so far wrong, that he could not prudently interpose an immediate contradiction, but had to feign a general acquiescence, although he was determined to thwart the purpose in some more gentle but not less efficient manner on an after occasion.

“I shall let her at the first,” Donald would say, “hae the length of her tether, but will by degrees draw in the cord, till she is sae straitened that she will be glad to be ta’en out of the difficulty.”

Nothing, however, could more tantalize the Scot than her new fangled notions about abjuring the nuptial tie, and the founding of a sort of nunnery in furtherance of a general scheme of the kind.

“Better turn Roman at once,” Donald would

observe; "it is celibacy after a queer fashion, and ought to be sneered out o' countenance as every thing that is unnatural deserves. I marvel what particular kind o' disappointment can have set the bonny lass sae mad wild against the men folks. I shall do my best in order to find it out. Maybe, after a', it is but a sudden and transient crotchety,—ane among a series o' crazy notions that are to perplex the poor leddy. In my opinion marriage would be the best thing that could be devised for curing her of the vapours whatever be the kind.—Yes, I shall stick to the side of the nuptial tie."

"We are losing time," said the young lady to the worthy Scot, one morning; "at the rate we are getting on, my scheme will never be brought to a bearing. Donald, ye must exert yourself, otherwise I shall be under the necessity of employing other hands. And first, ye must fix on a house, and on the fitting it up in a suitable fashion for the accommodation of the novices; there being needed school-rooms, and sleeping-rooms, &c., and a great variety of ingenious contrivances."

Now, *Mr. Brock*, as Sophia came to be in the habit of calling him, displayed no very great alacrity in finding out a mansion for her folly to play with; and when he did point out to her a building for her inspection, well adapted as he pronounced the house to be for her charitable and renovating intentions, it was nothing better than an old brick set of bare walls,—a place not at all coming up to the mark which she in her gorgeous imaginings had pictured for the accommodation of the school of abjuring maidens.

"This will never do, Donald," said Sophia; "the walls are not fit for a barn."

"Weel now," answered the Scot, "I imagined that I was following not only your directions, Miss Maxwell, but helpin' to carry out your plan, when I chose this large brick building. First of a' ye wished to be in the fine air of Pentonville; and secondly, a society that is to despise the world's ways, and to be scornfu' of my ain sex, wad be contradicting themselves, if they lookit at the outside or the grandeur that may be put within, neglecting the spiritual and social virtues of the novel character which you mean to profess. I counsel you, ma'am, to put up wi' the mansion that I have chosen for you, in the meanwhile, and maybe when you understan' your ain system better, and to have a clear view of its capabilities, you will tak' to another quarter. In the meanwhile, I am maist anxious to hae your instructions how I am to bring in the necessary disciples. Am I to look about me for the auld or the young bodies,—for the ugly or the beautifu'?"

"For the amiable and the pure in heart, Donald," cried Sophia; "it matters little what be the age or what the features of the face: but I must have directions from above to enlighten me on this and many other points which still remain in darkness."

After a conversation of this sort, the Scot would shake the head and look like one who felt pity for the enthusiast; and then she had to cross-examine him concerning his doubts and his objections, which would lead to many a diffuse colloquy, sometimes informing, at other occasions amusing.

"What astonishes me," observed the Scot, one day when Sophia was enthusiastically picturing what might be accomplished by a majority of her sex abjuring the nuptial tie, and living a life that would tell to the whole world that their hatred of man was as deeply fixed as it was well-grounded,— "is, what possibly could hae driven you, so young and beautifu', to this way o' thinking. For myself, I never can keep wealth lang towards any body, but least of a' towards woman, jilted although I may hae been. It's unnatural, my young leddy, quite unnatural; and I really wish that ye wad bestow your guid sense and your abundance upon some ither scheme of charity. Philanthropy ye canna call it; for this wad be a contradiction o' terms."

"Donald Brock," replied the damsel with considerable excitement, "it belongs not to you to question me, your employer, about the causes that may have driven me to the mode of thinking and acting which I am determined on. You have as little right to know what have been my wrongs or what may be my motives, as you have access to the heavenly lights that nightly visit my pillow. Do my biddings, or say nay, and then another shall take your place."

"But ablinn, Miss Maxwell, anither wad na be sae upright wi' you, or tell you honestly when he thought ye were gangin' wrong; while as to the light frae aboon, I think it wad be as wise were some folks wha lay claim to this supernatural intelligence, to inquire if that said sort o' rays didna come through a crack in the roof."

"Brock," cried Sophia, "you are wandering from the point at first stated,—you are like every Scotchman that I ever met with, most self-satisfied, talking as if there were none such as yourselves, and as if intelligence and morality were alone notions of your cold and bleak hills. And yet, I believe it to be the fact,—at any rate, I have often heard it asserted, that you, as a people, never think of returning to your own unexampled land when once you get a footing amongst us, at the same time that your virtue is so accommodating that it is, along with your religious devotion, thrown aside as soon as you cross over to the south side of the Tweed."

By the time that the fair colloquist and the sturdy opponent had arrived at this stage of the argument, considerable heat would characterise the manner and the language of both,—fortunately, however, as Donald felt, delaying the progress of the foolish scheme which the lady so eagerly contemplated,—enabling him at the same time, to feed his love at the shrine where he worshipped. Indeed, some might be of the mind that the Scot cherished at last a dream not much less visionary than any which had perverted the senses of Miss Maxwell; for he actually began to see a road by which he thought he might make himself acceptable to her as a wooer, and finally as a husband.

"It will be queer," thought Donald, "and as clever as queer, if I not only get her to lay aside her abjuring scheme, but to tak' a fancy for myself. How prettily wad Sophia Brock soun'! I wunna despair."

Accordingly the Scot set himself to the building of castles in the air when Miss Maxwell was resolving on erecting a most impracticable institution

in the vicinity of Pentonville. And this was Donald's outline sketch of the path that he should pursue:—

"I am, it is true, but a common working man, wi' neither a large store o' lair, nor of riches, nor of worldly pride o' birth; while my face is naeways very comely, nor my figure handsome. But I hae the spirit o' perseverance within me, and can stick to a point when once I hae said that I will.—Yes, perseverance! just let me get fairly my finger-end in and, soon you'll find that the whole person has made guid his entrance. I hae it! I hae it! Mr. Maxwell will tak' me as porter; I shall get evening schooling for a year or twa. My steady behaviour will gain me the situation of his book-keeper or clerk. By-and-by I shall be invited to become a partner of the firm, to the amount of a small share,—being a frequent guest at his table. My shares shall increase,—the wine-merchant growing older and unfit for business. At length the entire management will devolve on me; and having now by my perseverance, good conduct, and constant loving-kindness shown to the flighty Sophia, recommended myself to father as well as daughter, she will e'en gie me her hand, when we shall inherit all the wealth and all the honour of the old gentleman."

While Donald Brock was reasoning himself into the belief or strong hope that in the way sketched he should some day become probably a great man, and the husband possibly of the lovely Sophia Maxwell, that young lady was pursuing her crazy scheme,—that is, in as far as that the Scot was sent into poor neighbourhoods, in the hopes of his being able to procure converts to the abjuring creed, the agent taking care not to make the slightest progress, at the same time that he was reaping a handsome salary, not entirely, however, thrown away, seeing that he was in the gentlest manner that he durst thwarting the fanatical project of the half-crazed damsel.

How short-sighted were both,—the Scot as well as the merchant's daughter! How unsuspecting the latter of the dangers and disasters that impended over her head,—that surrounded her with an insurmountable power!

Enough it was, poor girl, to have to bear up against all thy remembered errors and troubles from the hands of wicked men,—enough, that incipient insanity seemed to be taking a firmer hold of thy spirit!

But, alas! other direful events were soon to overtake thee, when neither Dimmock, the Scot, nor the ex-drayman,—nay, not all the three put together, should be able to lend thee succour; for even the law of the land shall have been so framed, that vile conspiracy may aim under its sanctions the cruellest and most desolating of wrongs against thee!

It might have been expected that Arnold and Crawford,—now that Sophia was chiefly busied about some new scheme, and causing them little annoyance,—would have, being thus exempted, been glad to let her alone, fearful of re-provoking her wrath and vengeance. They both, however, had been so often bitterly pursued by her, and made such frequent sufferers, that they harboured the most fiendish spirit of retaliation, being resolved, should an opportunity ever occur,—be it in the course of a month, or of half a lifetime,—to crush her utterly.

Indeed, having heard that like a crazed enthusiast, she was continually racing about, and very frequently in mean neighbourhoods too, they set on foot an intricate and subtle plan of entrapping her, without risk to themselves of such receptions as they had frequently met with when they deemed themselves most secure.

"I felt assured all along," said Crawford to his associate Arnold, "that if we could obtain the means of violently outraging her feelings reiteratedly, we should drive her into madness, idiocy, or the grave. Now, my friend, she is racing rapidly to some one of these issues; and could we but find the means of lending her one other terrible blow, the feat would be accomplished, I'll be sworn."

"I myself, the other day," observed Arnold, "had a glimpse of her in passing through a mean quarter of the Borough, when she seemed in a highly excited state, hurrying from hovel to hovel, distributing assistance, no doubt, out of the very sums she has wrung from ourselves. There was an unusual brilliancy in her eye,—a sort of ecstatic gladness beamed in her countenance. I think she must have recognised me; but if she did, she had more urgent affairs upon her hands than even the pursuit or the abuse of me. But what new scheme for mastering her have you, James, hatched?"

"The thing that I have been cogitating," replied Crawford, "seems to require but some of our once boasted energy, and your universal acquaintance with London, to bring it to an early triumph."

The youthful impostor rose and paced his room as a man would do when he is so ill at ease that he cannot endure to hold his bodily frame in a state of stillness, seeing that the inward man is tumultuous; or as the same individual will bear himself when some sudden, great, and happy thought enters his mind, to which he cannot well give birth, if his person be not about as free and unrestrained as it ought to be when an heroic action has to be achieved.

"You are aware, Mr. Arnold," said James at length, "that old Maxwell is now in a great way as a wine-merchant, and we have heard likewise that he now makes it a practice, when he expects a large order, and is requested to furnish samples—to invite to his own table the individuals so favouring him. Now, cannot we find a pair of medical practitioners who would have no objection to a plentiful meal with the wine-merchant, and a waistcoat full of his good wine,—a pair who, at the same time would do you a service for a consideration?" he added, looking steadily and significantly at Arnold.

"Yes, all this may be easily understood and done. What then?" demanded the arch-impostor, not yet comprehending the other's meaning.

"The doctors need not be extremely scrupulous about matters of conscience, nor adverse to a bribe from us," observed the younger of the colleagues. "They need not even pass at first as medical men, but merely as large private purchasers of wines. Well, they dine, either on the same day, or on different days with the merchant; and they closely mark the appearance, and the conduct of our fiendish persecutor, setting her down, of course, as an insane person who should

not be allowed to go at large. Their joint certificate of this—whether real or merely alleged fact,—will be easily drawn out; so that the only thing which remains to be done afterwards upon this authoritative document, is to have the crazed creature suddenly taken up,—say when unguardedly in her charitable rounds, and whisked off to a private madhouse, there, a thousand to one, to go thoroughly mad, and be no more heard of by us."

"Your scheme, James," cried Arnold, "is capital and unexceptionable, in so far as the wine-merchant's daughter threatens us; and I can greatly expedite its execution. My friends Bremner and Barclay, of whom you, however, have no knowledge, will go to the world's end to serve me, it matters little what be the enterprise, provided I let them handle the golden guineas. These two diplomatised doctors are our men; and then for the asylum,—there is that one in Bethnal Green, kept by Dr. Fordyce, another particular friend, who is also hand and heart with both of the others. The trio, with my instructions and gold persuaders, will work wonderfully into one another's hands,—not one of them breathing a syllable about her name, identity, or whereabouts to a living soul, and holding it to be fact and true, as in Holy Writ, that not one word which she utters is to be minded more than the wail of the angry wind."

"Jacket her! yes straight-jacket her, the moment she is within your gates, Dr. Fordyce!" cried Crawford, transported at the certain prospect, as he felt assured, of the conspiracy taking place with perfect secrecy and success, and without at all involving him or Arnold in the outrage. "I shall only regret not being an eye-witness of the wretch's total and endless overthrow."

"Pinion her, strap her, and chain her!" cried Arnold in his turn; "let her rave and tear till doomsday, but it will not avail with my meek-eyed and soft-spoken Dr. Fordyce. Once in his keeping and she will come out of it with not a glimmer of sense in her. Oh! it is glorious to think of the hell she has to endure even before the grave is to open for her."

The villains having thus congratulated themselves and gloated with a savage delight at the prospect of their unparalleled wickedness being crowned with success, began to consider, during the pause that followed so much exultation, whether there were any draw-backs to the fulfilment of the scheme—any accompanying and formidable dangers. But nothing of the kind appeared to either, so far as the merchant's daughter was to be dreaded.

"At any rate, long before there is any likelihood of her restoration to her father, we shall be across the seas and out of reach for ever," was Crawford's comforting conclusion.

Arnold, however, took a more careful and expansive view of the scheme. He, along with the other, entertained little fear of its successful accomplishment, to the getting rid of poor and beset Sophia; but there was another, and he was now convinced, a very willing and cordial enemy to their prosperity—and this was John Dimmock, the faithful and attached servant of the Maxwells.

"What is to be done with him, James?" anxiously asked the senior miscreant. "Should

he remain after his master's daughter has been missed,—continuing week after week missing,—that fellow will assuredly accuse us of some foul deed perpetrated upon the girl; and even should he fail in any way of establishing proofs of his suspicions, he will be so convinced of our guilt and connexion with her disappearance, that he will denounce us both. No better then will be our fate than if the fiend herself had pursued us to conviction?"

"The difficulty and danger you allude to, Mr. Arnold," said James, "escaped me altogether; but surely if we can so easily and completely get quit of our principal foe, the inferior one might, I fancy, be not less readily disposed of. Could not your doctors do us a service with respect to the fellow Dimmock also? They will dine to a dead certainty with old Maxwell, provided they talk of orders for liquors, large enough to tempt the cupidity of the merchant. Let these orders be so delivered as that the intending purchasers shall be invited for distinct days. If the drug of the one fails the other need not; but if there be serious objections to this method of riddance, why, it is but to deal with Dimmock by means of certificate as probably on the same day they will have disposed of the wine-merchant's daughter."

James paused, for a bright thought had just been suggested by the very terms he had himself used at the conclusion of his last speech.

"Probably on the same day, did I say, Mr. Arnold?" cried he; "why, the doctors, you, I, and our agents, must positively have the disappearance of the mistress and the man to occur closely upon one another,—on the same day and at the same hour, if possible. What then? the certain inference will be drawn that they have gone together,—eloped some may conjecture, stirring up a pretty piece of scandalous construction; while others will as certainly cut the mystery short by supposing that the fellow has either foully murdered her, or that both have been sent to the bottom of the Thames, by a sudden squall,—a man and woman, as we ourselves shall choose to give currency to the report in newspaper paragraphs, having been seen to take boat at certain stairs and at a starlight hour."

"Good again, James," exclaimed Arnold; "a number of those details shall ripen on further consideration. We have got the general plan outlined, and trust me it shall not now want for skilful and clever filling up. Meanwhile I hasten to consult with the doctors, and to-morrow we shall further mature our plans. Farewell, James, and once more hold up thy head. We are not always to be fooled by the fiend, perdition to her!"

The colleagues parted with mutual congratulations, so gently and courteously spoken that a mere stranger and looker-on might have taken them for amiable spirits busy and delighted with some beautiful project of benevolence.

CHAPTER LI.

The foulest of conspiracies, Sir, drove me to this issue.
DAYDAN.

ARNOLD was all alive to forward this new conspiracy against the liberty and the peace of mind of poor Sophia; and another was to participate in



the terrible things to which he was so earnestly lending his willing hand.

Indeed, had a score of persons stood in the way of the impostors before they could safely reach the merchant's daughter, all would without a scruple have been consigned to dungeons or to death, provided it were with safety to the villains themselves—so utterly given up to the service of Satan were they.

We say that Arnold was in first-rate glee at the prospect of the scheme of which James Crawford had been mainly the concocter: he hurried from place to place in order to put all his agencies in a fitting train for the carrying out of what he called a brilliant conception; boasting to his pupil, who had just shown such a mastery, that he was quite his former self again, being, at the same time in that wonted frame of mind which was predictive

of complete success, however difficult or perilous the enterprise on foot.

Bremner and Barclay, the two medical gentlemen who were now to figure in the impostor's progress to the depths of crime, lived in the same vicinity on the Surrey side of the Thames. They were men of able parts, and had received a complete professional education.

Bremner, in particular, was a person of great talent; but somehow neither of them bore a better than dubious character, and their practice consequently fell amongst the low and poor, where, although there was a vast deal of business to conduct, no adequate remuneration could be expected. Neither of them were of provident habits—neither of them could remain out of debt: they were poor and often destitute; their tempers were soured, till at length they became so reckless

and desperate,—so hating and misanthropic, that there was scarcely any enormity to which they would not have lent a hand, if a bribe of an adequate amount preceded the performance.

Arnold heretofore had had experience of their greediness, their skill, their unscrupulousness, and their secrecy; and he flew first to the one and next to the other,—at last bringing the worthies together,—the result being a thorough understanding of what was to be done and of how the thing was to be done. Five hundred pounds was the sum that was to be paid for the part which they, the doctors, had to see fully performed,—the half down on the nail, as Barclay termed it,—the other half to be paid when the thing so anxiously thought of should be accomplished.

“You are to understand, James,” said Arnold, on his return to his pupil, Crawford, after the negotiations with the doctors had been arranged, “that they are to make their applications to the wine-merchant at the same time, requesting that he will appoint a day and hour when they may have an opportunity of tasting his wines with the view of having a very large order satisfactorily executed, as they are acting for a great colonial establishment. Well, having been guests at Maxwell’s table, we and they shall know better how to proceed. They write notes this evening to the effect mentioned,—that of having the wine-merchant’s appointment made as soon as possible.”

“But what of Dimmock?” cried the apt pupil.

“Oh! as regards him, we must wait also for Bremner’s and Barclay’s views: I assure you, James, they are not behind either of us in readiness of contrivance, quickness of apprehension, and fearlessness of execution.”

“But we shall require the aid of several ruffian characters, I imagine; and how are these to be provided and trusted?” said the younger of the impostors.

“Leave that to me,” answered the elder of them.

“But,” added he, “the main thing for us in the first instance to look to is,—as was suggested by one of my medical friends,—to ascertain when and where, in what manner, and by whose agency, she is to be abruptly seized and transmitted to Fordyce’s safe keeping. We must have some one set to watch her movements and to report to us of what she is about, during all this late activity of hers.”

The note which the doctors forwarded to the wine-merchant was promptly answered, that answer containing a pressing invitation to dinner, to taste Mr. Maxwell’s variety of vintages as well as of sorts.

Bremner and Barclay were punctual in responding to Mr. Maxwell’s invitation, doing themselves the honour of repairing to his hospitable mansion at the proper dinner-hour, and afterwards throughout the evening’s entertainment and social delights, bearing themselves with such courteousness, lively wit, and innocent humour as highly delighted the father and actually charmed the daughter. Sophia was consequently brilliant both in respect of looks and the flow of discourse; not disdaining to broach some of her new notions, however crude, and even a touch about the hallucinations which affected her.

And Bremner was wonderfully happy not only with his anecdotes but with the philosophy of the

mind, when that mind is subject to supernatural visitations, having in a moment caught her by.

“Be the visions that come to our bedside in the holy stillness of night, really of spiritual and heavenly birth, or only the gleams of genius, we know,” whispered the doctor to Sophia as they chatted together in the drawing-room, while the others present were pursuing their own discourse, “that some of the noblest undertakings and finest institutions have taken their rise from such moments of inspiration.”

“How glad and proud am I, Dr. Bremner,” cried the damsel, “when I find such profound knowledge and wide experience as yours corroborating my own poor notions of mysterious agencies. Would you believe it that I myself am favoured with the most wonderful revelations almost nightly, and that I am not resting like some who have been called visionaries in the mere belief, or even in the enthusiastic expression of my feelings, but am actually putting into practical shape the instructions which I have received from above.”

The poor, unsuspecting girl then went on to confide in the doctor the outline of her novel scheme for bettering the world, and especially for raising her own sex above their existing level.

She expatiated upon her doctrine of abjuring the nuptial tie, with a particular emphasis, becoming excited with her own fanatical creed to such a degree as to arrest the attention of the wine-merchant himself, who, coming up to the sofa where the young lady held such fervent discourse with the doctor, said, reprovingly, “You seem to me, child, to be quite beside yourself. I beg that you will keep your nonsense for meaner ears.”

“My excellent papa,” observed Sophia, “is so ignorant and incredulous of things which you and I know are real, that I seldom attempt to reason with him on the subject of which we have just been discoursing; my harshest reply being that I am happier than he can conceive, and that I shall obey my Father in heaven, even before the voice of my earthly parent, good and wise though he may be.”

The reproof which Mr. Maxwell had administered to Sophia,—a most unwonted thing,—operated upon her feelings in a manner not at all uncommon, we fear, when parent or guardian deals a correction; for instead of checking her speech to a person who was an entire stranger to her, or so impressing her as to make her cease from unfolding her closest secrets, it set her on to a fuller and, in fact, to a complete deliverance of herself, relative to the ridiculous crotchet with which she for some time had been wholly occupying her mind.

“Bermondsey, or its vicinity, allow me to inform you Dr. Bremner,” said Sophia, “is the most fertile field that I have yet traversed, for furnishing me with apt and docile disciples amongst the young of my own sex. Oh! I have a charming prospect in Lock’s Fields,—two of the sweetest and prettiest girls I have yet met with during my searchings, having fallen entirely into my views, and being ready to combine with me, the moment I have so systematized my institution that they can be of any service to me. I go daily to them, dear creatures, and sometimes more than once a day. I do wish, doctor, that you could meet me at their homes to-morrow evening, in

order that I may have your judgment relative to the state of their minds."

"With pleasure, my dear lady," said the man of medicine; "I shall have great satisfaction in conversing with you farther on the subject of what you consider to be the great end of your life on earth, independently of having such a rare opportunity of studying human nature as the young girls must afford: only you must make the hour late,—after night, at any rate, has set in; my professional pre-engagements being such as to occupy every moment of my time throughout the day."

Sophia readily agreed to this slight modification, and indeed professed that it would be most agreeable to herself, seeing that she was considerably annoyed by the curiosity of the neighbours of the young woman she so often visited, whenever it was known that she was with them.

In short, the doctor left her with many a circumstance of information that was requisite for the purpose of the atrocious conspiracy that was a-foot against the poor, infatuated damsel.

Nor did he depart from the wine-merchant's without further, and, indeed all that minute knowledge that Arnold and Crawford required, relative to the disposal of Dimmock as well as Sophia; for, as Bremner was about to leave, at a rather late hour, Mr. Maxwell's hospitable home, that worthy person took him aside for a few seconds, when this short conversation ensued:—

"You will pardon the freedom, doctor, that I now take," said the wine-merchant; "you are no doubt, nearly an entire stranger to me, but your professional character, and the nature of the first transaction between us, seem to be some warrant for the liberty I am using. The fact is, I should like to have your opinion with regard to my daughter's state of mind. Recently a very remarkable change has come over her, not merely as respects the style and subjects of her conversation, but her entire manner—nay, even in regard to the expression of her eyes and her ordinary looks."

The doctor shook his head according to the gravest fashion of the professionally wise, without at first saying a word; perceiving, as he did, that the wine-merchant had not yet concluded;—the burden had not yet been entirely got rid of, which was pressing on his thoughts.

"I have been exceedingly solicitous to have her consent to a change of air—in fact to a complete change of situation, condition, and climate," continued the father. "I should wish above all things to have her comply with my wish so far as to make a sojourn for a few months in Madeira. Independently altogether of a deep parental concern about her health, I have an important reason for desiring her temporary removal from this."

The worthy merchant again paused,—the doctor during the interval holding himself in the attitude of the most eager readiness to hear him out. It was almost laughable to observe how Mr. Maxwell hankered,—how he leant first upon one foot and then upon the other,—how he essayed the beginning of a new sentence, and how his face, particularly about the region of the mouth, struggled between a smile and a solemnity. However, he at last thus came out:—

"It may seem heartless and most selfish what I am going to say," continued the merchant.

"immediately after expressing my anxiety for my daughter's removal; but the fact is, I have taken to myself a new partner—I am married: I have been bound by the ties of wedlock to an amiable and accomplished lady these two weeks, but never have had the courage to say so to my child. I know that the scene which will ensue such a disclosure is to be a desperate one. Strange, is it not, that Sophia has, amongst her other phantasies, taken it into her head to rail against matrimony in all cases. In a word, I scarcely know what to do. My wife says that she ought to be mistress of my house; whereas I am certain that Miss Maxwell will contest the right. Let me, doctor, as a friend, have your counsel,—your best advice: we shall not fall out about the price of the wine."

"My dear friend," said Bremner, "I sympathise with you in every particular,—I appreciate your difficulties, but I am sure that I know how you ought to act. In the first place, your lovely daughter, poor lady, is at this moment of unsound mind, and what is more, she is fast going into a more decided state of mental derangement. Ere a few days elapse, it may be necessary to put her under restraint. At present it would be premature, perhaps; but I fear it will come to that extremity. Such being the case, I am prepared to say, in the second place, that you will not be acting in a kindly, just, and honourable way to your wife, if you, through any crotchet of your afflicted child, withhold from the lady her conjugal claims and rights in the smallest particular. By all means set her over your house,—plant her at the head of your table; and to encourage you to this end, I invite myself to dine with you the day after tomorrow, when I do hope to find the arrangement carried out that I now strongly recommend: perhaps I may on that occasion be of service relative to your lovely daughter."

"I shall follow your advice," said Mr. Maxwell, mightily relieved; "and I feel deeply obliged to you for its candour as well as for its weight. Now, a word about business:—at what time will it be most convenient for me to send you the small hamper of samples that you desire?"

"Let it be in the evening, after my daily rounds have been taken," replied Dr. Bremner.

"My man, Dimmock, shall be with you at six in the evening," said Mr. Maxwell: then, turning to Dr. Barclay, a similar inquiry was put, a similar response given, and a similar assurance repeated.

Sophia Maxwell and John Dimmock! are you not on the brink of a dreadful precipice,—a yawning pit, that is greedy for receiving you?

Alas! alas! that such premeditated wrong, and cunningly contrived outrage should be permitted to overtake the innocent and the guileless!

And Arnold, with your miscreant pupil, what are your congratulations now? Tell us the value of the ground upon which you build your extravagant rejoicings,—your raptures and transports? How long are you to riot in triumph? Is your victory to be for all time, think you? Is there to be no futurity for the adjustments between the wronged and the wrong-doers who have never had their accounts balanced while on this footstool, or before any human tribunal? Will it not be more tolerable at the Great Day, for the poor damsel whom you have driven to stark, staring,

madness, and for the reformed man whom she has so constantly befriended, than for you, ye votaries of the Evil One? Yet what good is there in reasoning with the utterly abandoned? Let us rather to the narrative.

Our pen would fail were we to attempt portraying the ecstasies of the colleague impostors the moment that they had Bremner's report of what transpired at Mr. Maxwell's. We shall only state that their delight seemed to be complete,—to be incapable of increase.

"I would," cried James, "willingly undergo all the distress, vexation, and fears which the fiendish wretch has forced me to experience, for the joy and happiness which I this moment find filling my bosom."

"I am of the same mind," returned the arch-impostor; "and you may throw into the scale the fabled horrors of hell, if you please. Still the gain shall be mine. But to business."

Having thus spoken, the pair set about completing their arrangements,—a matter not now of any apparent great difficulty, having received from the base doctors strong and formal certificates—such, in short, as the law demanded,—the necessary documents in order to have the person or persons therein mentioned consigned to the cells of a lunatic asylum. Indeed, the only obstacles to the consummation of their wishes that could reasonably be expected, related to the mere matter of mastering a certain amount of physical strength. Now, a pair of brawny ruffians would easily overwhelm the poor damsel: they had only to make themselves exactly acquainted with the hovel to which she was once more to repeat her visit—have a carriage near at hand—and the adroitness not only to pinion her arms but to stop her cries, in order to have her carried with the speed of horses to Fordyce's den.

Then, as to John Dimmock, he was to be drugged to stupefaction by the miscreants who were to act as the servants of Bremner and Barclay. The man would no doubt accept of a small gratuity given in the name of each of the doctors,—he would not refuse to partake of some refreshment given considerably by the domestics of those who were to be such large purchasers from his kind master.

And the man did, somewhat thirsty and fatigued as he was, take an ample draught of the *stout* that was set before him, first at Dr. Bremner's, and very shortly afterwards in the kitchen of the other medical worthy. John drank and fell as sound asleep as his young mistress had done when abused in Gower Street; he drank, and awakened not till the next morn, when he found himself in a narrow and low-roofed apartment, where the sun scarcely peeped in,—manacled and chained.

Scream and howl, man, till voice fails you, but you will not a moment the sooner have the door of that bedlam-chamber opened to you. You may grow delirious, and rave and foam at the mouth,—you may die of pain, of rage, or of horror; but it is only at the regulated times that a human creature will listen to you, or heed the value of a particle of dust, whether you are wronged or not wronged; for you are in Mr. Fordyce's second-rate establishment, his house for the lowly born and the short-coming in the way of remunerating him for perpetrating your destruction in the

cruellest conceivable way. You may bellow your fill for days and weeks and months; but the only return for all your sore trial and weighty toil will be to have the lash and the rod more relentlessly laid across you—to have you driven nearer to the starvation point!

Sophia Maxwell needed no over-mastering drug on this occasion. It was only to be snatched in a twinkling by sturdy arms—only to be whisked into the accommodating coach, before you had time to think; and away you are as securely and assuredly driven in the direction of Bethnal Green as if you had your home in that locality!

And you may shriek till you are hoarse: but your cries scarce pass out of the closely-shut and noisy vehicle where you are firmly seated.

Heard indeed! of what avail? The ruffians who have so suddenly snatched you are armed with the authority of the law; and who dare stop the execution of the law's mandates? No! ye men who have the bowels of mercy—for if even the doating parent, were before you, he dare not interpose his hand or tongue to arrest you—ye officers of the law, who shall as surely consign the outraged girl to the horrid prison house, so aristocratically *private*, that is kept by the smooth-tongued Dr. Fordyce, as that the hour will come when your worn-out body shall be laid in the cold and narrow grave!

It was a terrific scene, that same housing and imprisoning of Sophia Maxwell,—more terrible and horrible even than that which characterised the awakening in a neighbouring institution of the mocked and drugged Dimmock.

Sophia's eyes had all the terrible things to encounter which light could unfold,—her soul was filled with all the clear conceptions of her doom which an articulately read paper could communicate ere five minutes had elapsed from the time she was lifted out of the coach and carried into the mansion that had been built for keeping the really mad and the reputedly insane.

She perceived and fully understood in an instant what was her appalling doom; and had it not been that nature too strongly revolted to be checked by reason, she would not have shrieked as she did, nor struggled as she wildly attempted,—nor clutched at her eyes to tear them from their sockets,—nor cursed and prayed by turns, as she continued till sense and nerve wholly failed her.

No! no! it is not of the slightest avail to appeal to Fordyce; for his smoothness is so complete that no impression can there be received on such a surface.

It is not of the least use, poor Sophia, to cry to those of thine own sex who stand before or beside thee: for they come to bind and to strap thee.

Handcuffs and tightening waistcoats,—long-sleeved jackets and tough cords are the instruments of their tender mercies; so that unless death release thee, thou shalt not be set free.

Fare thee well, Sophia! to the dreary cell thou must be carried, and there thou must lie, and rave, and grow a maniac, if there be no other thing to befriend thee but our pity!

Fare thee well, once more—it is all that we can perform for thee. Long have we watched thy goings out and thy comings in: but now thy

have shut the obdurate door upon us; and but for the glimpses which the imagination may at times lend, must we be denied access to thy wretchedness!

"God help thee!" is all that we can say more!

CHAPTER LII.

His haunts were impervious even to the eyes of the most cunning, when concealment suited his purpose.

LABERIUS.

HENRY HUNTER had remained some weeks in London, as the reader is already aware.

But why had he thus tarried in the British capital? It was to seek out Arnold—to espouse the cause of Emily, weapon in hand—and to bring the base seducer to a just account,—this was his object! But as he had completely failed in meeting with the arch-miscreant—save on one occasion, when the wretch managed to elude his grasp, he penned such a letter that any one possessing the pride and proper feelings of a man could not help responding to it in a hostile manner—indeed, in the way which Hunter desired. This letter he himself left at the West-End Hotel where Arnold was in the habit of having his correspondence addressed, and whereat, it appears, he occasionally resided.

This note was duly received by Arnold, who returned the following answer:—

"Sir,

"It is in vain that you seek to annoy me on account of an amour which I, as a man of the world, chose to have with a girl who was only too willing to surrender herself to my arms. I shall neither risk my life, nor stand the chance of taking yours, for the sake of an obscure young woman who is unworthy my notice. Rely upon my word—and believe me, when I tell you that your time is but fruitlessly wasted, when passed in searching after one who can elude you at pleasure. Return home, and give up an useless chase—for I defy your endeavours to discover me against my will.

"STANLEY ARNOLD."

This singular letter, without date or address of the writer, somewhat damped the high hopes of Hunter, who had so fondly anticipated the certainty of being enabled to bring the abandoned seducer to an account. He, however, sent friend to institute farther inquiries; but to his mortification the master of the hotel, where Arnold occasionally resided, refused to answer any questions concerning him. Neither could money, threats, nor promises—supplications, nor stratagem, procure a single word of information amongst the domestics: their lips were either hermetically sealed; or they were ignorant of every thing connected with the mysterious being whom Hunter was so zealously, but evidently so uselessly, seeking. Several days did he weary himself by patrolling a hundred streets, in the vain hope of meeting with Arnold; the features of all who passed did he rigorously examine: often did he run, till his legs could scarcely sustain the weight of his body, when he fancied he had caught amidst a crowd a glimpse of some retiring figure that resembled Arnold's, while the people that thronged the streets were astonished at his manner, and were marvelling at the cause of his speed;—but all this was fruitless.

At last he determined to call again on Crawford,

and question him on the subject, but in such a way as to afford no ground for suspicion relative to his motives in sounding him. This was no sooner resolved on than executed. Having repaired to Conduit Street, he satisfied the curiosity of Crawford, who was surprised to find him still in London, by declaring that business had detained him in town.

"Wherefore did you not make my house your home?" inquired the hypocritical James, really delighted that the surgeon had taken his lodging elsewhere.

"Oh! your gay hours—your convivial friends, and jovial company suit me not," answered Hunter, with a faint smile. "I thank you all the same; but I love tranquillity—and I find it in the hotel I have selected; while you are engaged with Pearson and Arnold—"

"Arnold!" exclaimed James. "You know that while my mother was here, he never once came—nor did she ask after him. He visits me seldom at my house—I told you as much before."

"I recollect. Is his residence then so far from hence?" asked Hunter, assuming a careless air, although he awaited the reply with the greatest possible interest.

But Crawford merely answered evasively, and said something about Mr. Arnold's habit of residing in a hotel.

"Indeed! then he is doubtless wealthy?" said Hunter.

Crawford had hitherto answered without noticing in Hunter's queries any thing more than mere common curiosity. He however began to imagine that some ulterior motives directed that interrogatory; and as he was well aware that he must not speak too openly, he avoided farther pointed replies, under a plea of ignorance. Hunter saw that he was suspected, and that it was in vain to hope for direct information on the subject: he took his leave; and after another day or two of fruitless search about the West End, he quitted London, full of vexation—galled by disappointment—sick in mind and body—and overcome with sorrow,—but with the determination to hasten to Guernsey and see Emily without delay

CHAPTER LIII.

Wisdom for a man's self is, in many branches thereof, a depraved thing; it is the wisdom of rats, that will be sure to leave a house some time before it falls; it is the wisdom of the fox, that thrusts out the badger who digged, and made room for him; it is the wisdom of crocodiles, that shed tears when they would devour.

BACON.

On the morning following Hunter's departure—and which was two days after the consignment of Sophia Maxwell and Dimmock to separate lunatic asylums—Crawford, without having previously communicated his intention to Arnold, repaired to the dwelling of Mr. Nathaniel, with whom he had business concerning another supply of money.

"Your patron, Mr. Fitzgerald, has been absent some time longer than you at first anticipated," remarked the Jew with an obsequious smile, as Crawford seated himself in the handsome apartment to which he was always conducted when he called in that quarter.

"Yes, indeed," returned Crawford, by way of reply to the other's comment, while his countenance exhibited the most perfect serenity, and not a blush mantled on his pale cheek: "but I expect him home shortly," he continued. "Perhaps he is already on his voyage to England—at least I hope so."

"I dare say—supplies run short—aye—aye, Mr. Crawford!" cried Nathaniel, with a chuckle.

"My purse is but indifferently well lined at present," was the answer: "but, by the bye, have you heard any thing favourable concerning Sir George Mornay lately? has he settled the debts you mentioned to me some six or seven months ago?—I dare swear not."

"This very morning I expect him," returned Mr. Nathaniel, to the astonishment of Crawford. "He promised to call at about one o'clock—yes, one: it is now half-past twelve," added the money-lender, glancing at a splendid watch that lay upon the table.

"The devil! he will call this morning, Mr. Nathaniel," ejaculated James, a singular craving of curiosity flashing across his mind. "I have never seen this Sir George Mornay," proceeded the youth slowly; "could you so arrange that I might catch a glimpse of my proud relative?"

"Yes, with pleasure; you shall see him to whose title you will succeed."

"And how can it be managed?" demanded the youth.

"Do you notice that large cupboard at the end of the room?—Well, it was originally intended for private papers and cash-boxes: but those articles have been since removed to another office in my house. The place is sufficiently commodious for your purpose; and through the key-hole you may satisfy your curiosity. The baronet will not stay five minutes; his habits are not to tarry and waste his precious time in conversation about trivial matters. Business once over, he rises and departs forthwith, probably to transact other affairs."

"I return you many thanks, my dear sir," exclaimed Crawford, delighted with the scheme proposed.

At that moment the hasty roll of wheels up the street, then a loud ring at the bell, announced the arrival of some visitor in a carriage; and Mr. Nathaniel speedily discovered from the window the equipage of Sir George Mornay.

The wily Jew pushed James into the closet, and hurried to the stairs to receive the baronet with due deference.

Crawford's heart beat quickly, for he was now to see that singular individual, whose character was so mysterious—whose unaccountable behaviour towards the poor relatives of his departed cousin spoke much of eccentricity, or even cruelty! James was now to behold him, he thought within himself, for the first time. An unaccountable trembling came over his frame: footsteps approached along the passage leading from the summit of the stairs to the apartment in which James lay concealed, and Sir George Mornay entered the room, followed by the obsequious Mr. Nathaniel—when to the terror and confusion of the Jew, and to the surprise of the baronet, a violent scream issued from the closet.

"What means that?" inquired Sir George

sternly, while poor Nathaniel quivered like an arrow the moment it has pierced the target and become attached to the board. "Speak!" continued the irritated baronet: then seeing that he was far from likely to obtain a speedy response, he coolly walked up to the fatal cupboard, pulled open the door, and recognised James Crawford—yes, reader, *recognised*—for he had seen him before.

For a moment Sir George Mornay was irresolute how to act; but that irresolution lasted not more than the moment, during which Crawford was speechless with excess of agitation and alarm.

"Say not a word, but follow me," said Mornay to the youth, who obeyed this command with mechanical deference and despatch, as if he were a bird fascinated by the eye of the crafty serpent. "Mr. Nathaniel, good morning: you will call at my house this evening between eight and nine," added the baronet, as he bowed coolly, and led the way to his carriage, followed by Crawford.

In a short time they stopped at the baronet's house in Portland Place.

Whatever was the nature of the conversation that took place during an interview of at least three hours, between these two individuals apparently thrown so awkwardly together, Crawford retired to his own dwelling partially satisfied, and partially discontented.

* * * * *

Four days after the incident just related, Mr. Nathaniel called upon James, and, in the course of conversation inquired if there were any news as yet with regard to the expected return of Mr. Fitzgerald.

"Yes," returned Crawford; "I have lately received a packet of letters, in which I am happy to hear that his speedy arrival in England may be looked for as certain. He has, moreover, sent me a handsome present—"

"Of money?" asked the Jew.

"No—of wine. I dare say he fancies the cash, that he left with me, is not yet exhausted," said James, affecting a pleasant smile.

"And, if it be not impertinent—of what species is the wine you allude to?" asked Mr. Nathaniel.

"Madeira—I believe. But you shall taste it."

"I thank you—not at this moment. Then," continued the Jew, "I am to suppose, my dear Mr. Crawford, that your kind benefactor has not yet left Portugal?"

An answer was given that was far from satisfactory to Mr. Nathaniel, who anxiously looked forward to the time when the considerable loans he had advanced Crawford should be repaid with the exorbitant interest that had accumulated upon them.

James succeeded, however, in pacifying the Jew, and after a long expatiation upon his splendid prospects, said, "By the way, when do you intend to dine with me, Mr. Nathaniel? Are you engaged to-morrow?"

"I had rather you would say next Monday, if it be the same to you," returned the Jew.

"Agreed—on Monday you are my guest," said Crawford. "We must dine alone—*tête-à-tête*

positively; and I promise you a good glass of the wine I mentioned."

"And although my habits do not usually permit me to dine abroad, I will for once relax their severity, since you are so particular a friend, my dear Mr. Crawford; but only on the conditions proposed, that we shall be alone, and that you regale we with the wine from Portugal," added Mr. Nathaniel.

He then took his leave.

CHAPTER LIV.

As for me, I swear by all laws human and divine, by the statute that is written in the heart of man—that the hypocrite and the deceiver shall be themselves deceived!

VOLNEY'S Ruins.

THE day arrived on which Mr. Nathaniel was engaged to dine with Crawford, as already related. Punctually at the hour of six, the worthy Jew, habited in his best suit of black, knocked at the door, and was admitted to the drawing room, where James awaited his arrival. In a few minutes dinner was announced; and they descended to the parlour below.

During the meal, by the materials of which the art of gastronomy was proved to be well understood in Crawford's kitchen, the Madeira, so faithfully promised, was produced, and was declared excellent by Mr. Nathaniel, to the great joy of his entertainer. By accident the Jew happened to take the cork of one of the bottles in his hand, and carelessly examined the sealed top of it. His countenance changed in a minute—he gazed at Crawford—then at the cork once more—the youth was not noticing him, nor his emotions—and the cork was instantly conveyed to Nathaniel's pocket.

"This wine is doubtless old," said he, addressing Crawford, as if nothing had happened.

"I believe so: Mr. Fitzgerald hinted as much in his letter," was the reply.

"Indeed. Well—I have some Madeira, myself—at home," cried Nathaniel, after a moment's thought. "It is not certainly as good as this—but of such a quality, that I should not be ashamed if you were to taste it, my dear Mr. Crawford. Will you allow me to have the pleasure of your company to dinner, to-morrow?"

"I shall be delighted," returned James.

"You are not better engaged?"

"No—that is impossible. To tell the truth, I am not engaged at all; and even if I were," continued James with a smile, "I could not pass a more pleasant evening than I am certain to do with you."

Nathaniel acknowledged the compliment, felt satisfied in his own mind how to act, and resumed some topic of conversation on which they had touched before; nor did he allow Crawford to suspect in the least that there was any evil brewing against him.

To be brief, the hour of midnight had struck before either was aware that it was so late. Anecdotes, tales, and agreeable discourse had whiled away the time; and they parted, James being perfectly contented with his guest, and Mr. Nathaniel apparently as much so with his entertainer. ||

On the following afternoon, Crawford was seated at table, with the Jew, in Golden-Square. The Madeira was soon set forth, but was of the same kind as that which had been drunk the day previous in Conduit Street!

"Is there much difference?" inquired Nathaniel, with a satanic laugh, which Crawford could not but notice.

"None—I assure you—in the flavour," answered the youth, trembling, he scarcely knew wherefore.

"And in the age?" persisted the money-lender.

"None, either—I should imagine," said James, almost sinking upon the floor, and dreading instant detection; for, of course, we need not inform our readers that his own story concerning the wine sent from Portugal was a mere fabrication.

"And is there any more discrepancy in the corks than there is in the flavour or the age?" demanded the Jew coolly, but peremptorily, while a demoniac smile of irony curled his lip, as he handed the cork which he had secreted the day before over to his companion; at the same time tendering another drawn from his own bottle. "There is your cork—and here is mine; and yet my wine came not *direct* from Portugal!" he exclaimed.

Crawford cast a single glance upon the damning proofs of his falsehood: on both were the seal and name of "Jacob Wright."

It was strange that he should have thus committed himself—it was remarkable that so ridiculous an oversight should cause his detection! It was marvellous that he had not better arranged his bottles, ere they were unfortunately placed before the cunning Israelite: but it was not astonishing that the circumstance should have instantly excited the suspicions of Nathaniel, and should have made him tremble for the extensive loans he had advanced him whom he found beyond doubt to be an IMPOSTOR.

Crawford's countenance now betrayed all his guilt—his firmness forsook him—his presence of mind failed him—only for a moment did he endeavour to summon the last remnants of his impudence to his aid, and still brave out the matter—but it was useless—and with a cry of horror he sank down upon the carpet, crying, "Save—oh! save me—do not expose me—for I am degraded for ever: consider my mother—my sisters—consider—oh! consider, that it will not benefit you, to seal my eternal ruin!"

The Jew's eyes flashed fire.

"Young man," said he in a deliberate tone of voice, "you must of me expect *no* mercy."

"Great God! is your heart so obdurate?" cried James in agony, as he writhed on the floor, like the wounded serpent.

"Yes, my heart to you is obdurate," continued Nathaniel; "for by you I am nearly ruined. Think of the vast sums—my hard-earned riches—of which you have pitilessly robbed me,—and then forbear to talk of mercy! Where was your mercy, when you, impudent in your air, and assured in your manner, saw me drain my coffers to satisfy your extravagancies? Where was *your* consideration, when, instead of being contented with the few thousands I first lent you,—your

unbounded avarice, your greediness—your fear of letting me slip through your fingers—your determination not to lose a single opportunity of cheating—of even reducing me to beggary if you could—where—where, I ask, was *your* consideration, when you sucked me dry?”

“All—all this is true!” exclaimed James. “But remember that you have lived by others as well as I! Have not the various anecdotes you have told me given ample proofs thereof?”

“Rascal—villain—impostor!” thundered the Jew, in a transport of indescribable wrath; “had you not thrown that in my teeth, there was still hope left for you! But you are a scoundrel, a hypocrite to the bottom of your soul! Whatever I may be—whatever I may have been, I care not. I glory in cheating: *but I am not to be cheated!* And yet, would to God, that I had been the author of your imposture! Never—never was there so admirable a plan! Were it not already worn threadbare, I would join you: as it is, I must have my vengeance!”

Scarcely had he uttered these last words in a hurried tone and with impassioned manner when he rang the bell furiously.

A servant immediately answered the appeal.

“Tell Mr. Trap to walk in,” said Nathaniel: and assuming an air of coolness, he sauntered towards the window.

“For God’s sake, what will you do?” asked James, with more agony of mind than he had ever yet experienced.

“Nothing—be still!” exclaimed the Jew, while a suspicious looking individual entered the apartment, followed, at a respectful distance, by two other personages not a bit better-flavoured than their leader.

These were Sheriffs’-officers; and in spite of his tears, his supplications, his reproaches, and his prayers, Crawford was taken into custody at the suit of the relentless Mr. Nathaniel.

Half an hour afterwards, the Impostor was pacing a room at one of the spunging-houses in Chancery Lane.

A couple of hours passed—two hours of dreadful reflection and troubled reverie, when the door of the apartment suddenly opened, and Pearson sauntered slowly into the room.

Ah! my dear friend,” said the man of the world; “I have heard of your misfortune; but you must allow that it is a little too strong to pretend so much. You know my affection for you. What is the sum, while I think of it, that you are in this cursed hole for?”

“Many thousands,” answered James. “And now, that my situation is known, I shall be beset by all my creditors.”

“Indeed,” said Pearson coolly. “Well—we must get you out, you know, my dear friend—eh!”

“It is impossible, Pearson. You have not a hundredth part of the money: even if you had, I would not take it. I have sinned, and I must suffer.”

“Do not preach, at all events. Sermons in a spunging-house, forsooth!” and Pearson laughed heartily.

“Gaiety in such a house is more annoying,” cried Crawford, sharply.

“Oh! no—it can’t be,” drawled out the *roué*—“impossible, my dear fellow. Well—do n’t

make yourself unhappy: we must get you out, you know, Crawford.”

And having said these words, he took up his hat, swung out of the room with a chilling “*good-bye*,” and chuckled as he descended the stairs. All the favours he had received at the hands of the Youthful Impostor were forgotten; the dinners, the feasts, the entertainments, the moneys he had borrowed, dwelt no longer in the fashionable gentleman’s memory. In after years, if Crawford’s name were mentioned, Pearson affected a momentary oblivion: then, feigning a slight reminiscence of such a person, he turned upon his heel, with “Oh! yes—I do call to mind the young villain, who humbugged us all.”

So it is with the generality of the world. Surrounded by wealth, luxury, and the means of enjoyment, we may have friends innumerable, as the gay garden, rich in variegated flowers, attracts the painted butterflies. But if poverty be our meagre guest, if desolation hang round our walls, then do our once flattering and obsequious friends depart; as the garden is deserted by the butterfly, when Winter presides over Nature, and nips those attractive flowers which once abounded with seductive sweets.

Indeed, Pearson’s call was only instigated by motives of curiosity. He had heard a rumour of Mr. Nathaniel’s alarming discovery of Crawford’s real situation; he had, therefore, hurried to the lock-up house to convince himself of the truth of the report—for at first the tale appeared ridiculous. Through his, and the agency of others, the whole metropolis was soon aware of the circumstance: and those newspapers, that were lately so glad to sing the praises of Crawford, were now prepared to publish his ruin, his infamy, and his disgrace.

Hands were held up in astonishment—tongues were for a period stricken dumb—utterance was arrested—limbs were palsied, as it were, when the news was bruited around. Some arrogantly declared that the real story had always been suspected by sensible men; others candidly avowed that they never had been so deceived. Those who were jealous of a fellow-creature’s prosperity, were rejoiced; the duped creditors were almost driven to distraction—for some had experienced immense losses by the *honour* of Mr. Crawford’s custom. Those who had forced their goods upon him were furious, cursing their unlucky stars, and vainly wishing that a more prudential economy had regulated their behaviour. Billiard-rooms, coffee-houses, clubs, &c. were crowded with gossips employed in canvassing the business thus strangely brought to light. A subscription was set on foot for Mr. Nathaniel, to recompense him for his defeated speculations, and to reward him for having exposed a reprobate to the world!

We should also observe that the female friends, at whose house Mrs. Crawford had left Catherine, wrote a letter to that lady in Guernsey, informing her as delicately as possible of the event, and promising to treat her daughter with even increased kindness, as well as to keep her ignorant of the fact, till her mother should be on the spot to break it to her.

And what of James Crawford himself? He was reduced to despair, and at times was nearly driven to suicide! Even, when he enjoyed an interval of comparative calmness, he thought of his mother



—and big tears fell down his cheeks; he thought of his sister, and heavy sighs arose in his bosom!

Oh! for that peace of mind he had once enjoyed! Oh! for that internal calmness which had been his, ere he first plunged into the vortex of crime! But bliss for him could never more be: contumely, insult, and sorrow must attend him, till the hand of Death should send him to a dishonoured tomb!

Several days passed away, and none of his once all-fawning friends came near him. To Arnold he dared not write, for reasons of his own. Pearson visited him him no more. The writ became returnable; and Mr. Trap intimated to him the necessity of settling his affairs, or of passing over to a prison. To the latter alternative he was obliged to submit: an attorney was called in; a *habeas corpus* was procured; and James quitted

the spunging-house, to surrender himself at Sergeant's Inn into the care of a tipstaff, who waited for the purpose of conducting him to the King's Bench.

CHAPTER LV.

A rapid glance at divers things, that we may help the tale along.

Old Drama.

It was now about the end of February: cold and ungenial was the weather, considering the placid climate so prevalent in Guernsey; and the trees were leafless around Mrs. Pembroke's dwelling, save the evergreens that flourished despite of winter. Amongst the servants were anxious faces: their steps were measured; and their looks down-

cast :—amongst the superior inmates deep changes had been wrought. Mrs. Crawford was confined to her bed by illness, brought on by the dreadful tidings of her son's imposture, imprisonment, and disgrace. The chilling news were indeed more than enough to overwhelm her with sorrow. She had seen and forgiven a daughter's shame; she had been compelled to recognise the perfidy of one whom she had formerly deemed a sincere and firm friend; and now that the chief comfort she had left—he, from whom she had expected so much, and loved so tenderly,—now that he had proved a villain, a swindler, and a cheat;—now that two of her children—~~these~~ children whom she had nurtured with such care, with such maternal solicitude—had gone so far astray from the paths of virtue in which she had with labour reared them,—she felt sick at heart, wounded in soul, dissatisfied, disappointed, inclined to mistrust all, and to neglect those cares which would still redeem her health.

And Emily—was she at the couch of her mother, to attend to the wants of the parent who gave her birth? Oh! no—for she was herself a mother! A child—a male child, resembling Arnold as much as infancy can resemble manhood, nestled in her bosom; and Hunter had aided her in giving birth to that child. He, who would have surrendered up the best years of his life to have been its father, now gazed upon the infant belonging to his rival. But it was with pleasure that he saw the poor girl's health improving, although her labour had been a dangerous one. Mrs. Pembroke divided her time between Mrs. and Miss Crawford, to the utmost of her ability; notwithstanding she had private cares of her own, and private reasons for sorrow, to occupy her attention, and lacerate her heart.

For some time she had had no correspondence with her husband at all; though she not unfrequently heard of his motions and proceedings from various sources. A few days previous to the accouchement of Emily, a letter was placed in Mrs. Pembroke's hand; and to her astonishment she immediately recognised the writing of that husband. Be assured, reader, that the contents were not penitential excuses for past cruelties, nor even advances towards a reconciliation. They merely went to say, that by the death of one of her own relations, Mrs. Pembroke had come into a small property of a few thousand pounds; and an equal division of this fortune was proposed by her husband.

Notwithstanding it was entirely at her disposal, she instantly acquiesced in his wishes, and answered him briefly to that effect. But to her sorrow, he informed her in his rejoinder that it was absolutely and indispensably necessary for her to sign certain deeds in his and a lawyer's presence; and to conclude the matter, he added that she might expect him on the business mentioned within as short a time as possibly suited his convenience and leisure.

The insolent coolness which characterised the general tenour of the communication, and the unpleasant anticipation of an interview with one whom she had tenderly loved, but to whom she could never again utter the syllables of affection, excited within her the liveliest sorrow and the most cruel suspense. She, however, supported her

griefs with as much firmness as possible, and relaxed not in her attentions towards the sick inmates of her dwelling.

Mrs. Crawford had received no letter from her son, and had been too enfeebled to write or dictate any. She had requested Hunter to reply to the sorrowful epistle of her friends in London, to thank them for their kindness towards her daughter Catherine, and to beg them to continue their guardianship of her till she herself could return to London, and resume her charge of that amiable and excellent girl.

And now that we have again mentioned her name, we will relate the manner in which the Honourable Captain Stewart behaved, the moment he heard the terrible and astounding tidings of Crawford's imposition and detection,—tidings which overwhelmed him with grief and astonishment. His first act was to hasten to Catherine—to break the news gently to her—to console her—to assure her that he thought not the worse of her in consequence of her brother's guilt—and to implore her not to give way to grief on account of the dreadful exposure which had taken place,—or at least to subdue her sorrow as much as possible. Thus was it that by reiterated assurances of his affection, and by palliating as much as he dared the enormities of which Crawford had been guilty, Stewart succeeded in comforting the beautiful maiden. To her affectionate desire of hurrying to console her brother, whatever were his crimes—whatever were his delinquencies—Stewart, of course, put a decided negative, but in so gentle a manner, and accompanied with such mild reasoning, that Catherine perfectly agreed with him; and they parted with renewed vows of love: she more composed, though still deeply grieved, and he feeling satisfied that he had broken the news so gently to her. His ideas of moral justice were such, that he could not for a moment allow himself to be in the least prejudiced against the innocent Catherine, because her brother happened to be guilty and disgraced.

But with his father, on his return to Jermyn Street, he had a difficult course to follow.

"Well, sir!" said Lord Fanmore, who was laid up with severe indisposition. "I suppose you have been to visit the sister of the greatest rascal in the world, eh? Is it not so?"

"Yes," returned Stewart. "But she is not disgraced by his villany."

"How? will not the world cry out against her?" ejaculated the old nobleman, rendered more irritable than ever by sickness and bodily pain. "Infamy runs in the family, I tell you, sir: ask Sir George Mornay his opinion of the Crawfords—and see what he will tell you."

"I thought," said Stewart respectfully, "that you had no very good opinion yourself of that same Sir George Mornay?"

"Certainly not! But would you go and throw yourself away upon a portionless, penniless, low girl, whose brother—"

"Do not reproach her father," interrupted Stewart gently. "If her brother has merited the righteous scorn of all good men, she herself is as pure as an angel still, and untainted by Crawford's turpitude. It were hard, indeed, that one relation should suffer for the crimes of another!"

"But it is gospel, sir—or, at all events, it is in

the Bible," said his lordship; "and I will prove it to you. Does not the commandment positively declare, *'that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, even to several generations?'* why not, then, from a brother to a sister, I should be delighted to know? And was not Adam the cause of our present miseries? and do not all suffer for the wickedness of one who lived, as they say, six thousand years ago?"

"A good and virtuous man cannot be punished by a just God for sins in which he was not concerned, and in which he was very far from being a participator," observed Stewart.

"I do not care what you may think about it, Mr. William; *because I have the Bible for authority*; and that is as good to dispel all doubts as a regiment of King's soldiers to disperse mobs," exclaimed Lord Faumore; and having uttered these words, he fell back exhausted upon his pillow.

"My dear father," said Stewart in a low voice; "you yourself have seen her, and you have been able to judge of her amiability, her beauty, and her numberless merits."

"And yet you will throw yourself away in so idle a manner!" murmured his lordship in a tone of deep vexation. "Are you not my heir? and have you not to support the dignity of a noble house?"

But what was Stewart to do? He scorned to tell a lie, and mislead his father by promising obedience; and his happiness depended entirely on his union with Catherine! He therefore said no more on the present occasion; but remained silent and pensive: while Lord Faumore, fatigued with reasoning, and irritated at his son's conduct, sank into a sound sleep, which lasted several hours, but without producing any very beneficial effect to the old nobleman, who now firmly believed that the hand of Death was upon him, and that his time was come at last!

* * * * *

Ere we conclude this chapter, let us once more direct the reader's attention to the island of Guernsey.

One morning Mrs. Pembroke was seated by the bedside of Emily, talking on different subjects, after having made kind inquiries concerning the young mother's health, to which satisfactory replies were given, accompanied with many expressions of gratitude.

"You yourself, my dear madam, have lately appeared much dejected," said Emily: "within these last two weeks I have noticed your manner to be greatly changed—not in generosity towards us;—oh! no—but I cannot help fancying, you have received news to afflict you," she added, taking advantage of a pause in the discourse to introduce a subject on which she had pondered with sorrow.

"I will dispel your doubts, Emily," returned Mrs. Pembroke, seizing the invalid's hand, and pressing it affectionately. "You know that we have seldom spoken of my husband—that we have generally avoided the subject:—it is concerning him—it is on account of him that I am unhappy. I have told you that we separated by mutual consent:—I changed my name, and came hither:—he remained in London, as his affairs demanded his continual presence in the metropolis. In a few days he will be here!"

"Your husband will be here!" exclaimed Emily, raising herself in bed, and gazing on Mrs. Pembroke with looks of surprise and of sympathy.

"Yes, I expect him shortly; and though the interview will last but an hour, if so much, still I dread it deeply. His object is to obtain my signature to some deeds of importance."

"Can you endure the presence of one who has ill-treated you?" asked Emily blushing,—for a sense of all the wrongs she herself had undergone, rushed upon her soul.

"Hush! I must endure the presence of my husband!" said Mrs. Pembroke softly. "But, oh! if you only knew how I have loved that man—how my heart was entirely his—and how I submitted to insults and even blows, till patience was exhausted,—oh! you would indeed pity me!"

She could say no more—violent emotions choked her, and prevented her tongue from giving utterance to the thoughts of her bosom: she waited not to expose her weakness, amiable though it were, to Emily—but hastened out of the apartment, leaving in her hurry and confusion a letter lying upon a little table near the couch of the young mother.

Emily was reclining supported on one arm: her countenance was pale, and was rendered more so in appearance by the white bed-clothes.

Her innocent child—guiltless fruit of a guilty amour—lay sleeping beside her, rocked in untroubled repose.

A tear stood in Emily's eye, as she thought of all the sorrows which she and James had brought upon their mother; and most sincerely did she pray for the welfare of Catherine. But she looked beautiful, in spite of her grief and the colourless hue of her once blooming cheeks.

Presently she gazed with a maternal fondness upon the dear pledge of love beside her; and then she resumed the recumbent posture she was in, when Mrs. Pembroke left the apartment. A sigh, for the woes of the kind and benevolent lady, agitated the fair and voluptuous bosom which beat beneath the slight vest that only partially concealed it. Oh! had the experienced limner been there, that bed-scene were a glorious subject for his pencil! A young and charming mother, tempting, and in the pride of youth and beauty, with her delicate infant—that infant the offspring of illicit love—yet how sincere was the love!—beside her!

And how great, how forcible is the attachment of a mother to her child! Even though it be the child of infamy—the thing that published its parent's frailty and disgrace,—still, true as a planet to its centre, will she cherish, fondle, and attach herself to the little infant which alone can console her, while she labours under the opprobrium levelled against her by an uncharitable world!

For some time Emily remained absorbed in deep thought, her head still resting upon her arm. By chance her eyes fell upon the letter which Mrs. Pembroke had accidentally left:—she started—gazed intently on the address—examined every line with the deepest scrutiny! "Could it be his? was it, indeed, *his* handwriting? It was—it must be!"

She was about to tear it open, and satisfy herself by a reference to the contents, when a sudden reminiscence restrained her hand, telling her that

she had no right to intrude upon the secrets of her benefactress. But the handwriting on the envelope was sufficient.

"Great God!" she cried; "is it possible? can he be the husband of this amiable woman? can he have so deceived——"

And she sank upon the pillow, her bosom replete with a thousand conflicting emotions.

Again she examined the outside of the letter. "Mrs. Pembroke, Guernsey," was all that was thereupon written, (because it had been sent in a box of papers by her husband's lawyer);—*but that was the writing of Arnold!* Whether he were only the friend of Mrs. Pembroke, or a nearer relation, was still a matter of speculation and interest for Emily.

Whatever were the result of her deliberations, she, at all events, made up her mind to forbear from hinting a word on the subject to the kind and charitable woman who had evinced so much generosity towards her.

Hunter and the nurse presently entered the room. The former seated himself by the bedside, and taking Emily's hand to feel her pulse, he put many questions to her concerning her health:—the latter busied herself about certain domestic affairs, connected with the mother and the child; after which she quitted her chamber to search for something in the kitchen.

"In a day or two, Emily," said Hunter, with a faint smile, "you shall rise from your bed; and in another week I shall see you once more convalescent, and free from pain. Oh! you know not," he continued, after a pause, "how I have suffered, since that infant, now so calmly sleeping, first saw the light of an unhappy world! Its birth has been a source of constant meditation with me: my slumberless nights have been passed in the mental contemplation of its features;—for though the innocent child be not then with me, yet memory, ever faithful to her trust, retains those features well! I shall not linger long on earth:—I have seen you safe from danger; I have aided to bring into the world the miniature counterpart of one who loved you not as I have loved you, or he could never have injured you;—I have searched in vain to avenge you, and your wrongs——"

"God be thanked!" exclaimed Emily, clasping her hands together: "God be thanked, that the parent of this child has not been injured! Yet, Henry, I thank you—oh! how deeply I thank you! how grateful is my heart for all your kindnesses!"

"Dear Emily," returned the young surgeon, again taking her hand, and pressing it to his bosom, while he gazed earnestly, but not with the eyes of desire, on the features of the youthful mother,—"*my days would have been devoted to your service, had your love been for me—had your affections not have been placed upon a villain.*"

"Do not reproach me, Henry," said Emily, in a mournful voice, while tears trickled down her cheeks.

"Reproach you, Emily!" cried Hunter: "never, oh! never!"—and he caught the poor girl in his arms, embracing her with ardent affection.

She did not resist him—why should she? She

knew how deeply he had loved her—she felt herself secure with so sincere a friend—no impure thought entered their imaginations—her bosom heaved against his chest—her beautiful cheek, now tinged with a slight colour, rested upon his. This was the second time that ever Hunter's lips had met those of Emily. Long and tender was the embrace:—at length they separated—and the surgeon once more seated himself by the side of the bed, as the nurse again entered the apartment.

* * * * *

A few days after the incidents just related, a letter was received by Mrs. Crawford from Captain Stewart—now Lord Fanmore—announcing the death of his father.

CHAPTER LVI.

Fortune is merry,
And in this mood will give us any thing.
SHAKESPEARE.

ONE morning Mr. Nathaniel was seated in his office, looking over some accounts, when a well-known carriage drove up to the door, and Sir George Mornay was shortly ushered to the Jew's presence.

"I have called, Mr. Nathaniel, said the baronet, "to speak about young Crawford. It is very immaterial to me, whether you detain him or not; but I tell you candidly—in fine, it is a duty I owe society in general, to speak the truth with openness—that you will gain nothing by it."

"It is not I alone, sir," returned the Jew, "who keep him in prison. Numberless other creditors have lodged detainers against him. To tell you the truth, I am sorry I had any thing to do in the affair: the business is unpleasant—it has exposed me as a money-lender, although you know the honesty of my dealings."

"Ah! Mr. Nathaniel!" said Sir George. "But I acted in a moment of wrath," continued the Jew; "and most willingly would I give a great deal to undo it. True, the villain has nearly ruined me;—thousands of pounds out of my pocket!"

"You are willing to release him?" asked the baronet.

"I have not the least interest in keeping him in prison, since he can pay nothing," was the reply.

"What if you were to call a meeting of his creditors, and represent the hopelessness of their case," said Sir George Mornay. "I myself should probably have interfered before, had I deemed the matter worth immediate attention: he is a disgrace to his family, and were as well abroad. If you will effect his liberation, I will supply means to take him out of the country."

"My dear sir," returned the Jew, "'t is an unfortunate affair; and I say once more, that I am inclined to favour his release, since by so doing I should oblige you."

"Not exactly oblige me, Mr. Nathaniel; for you are aware it cannot much regard my interests:—at the same time, Crawford were as well on the Continent as in England. People have nearly ceased to talk of him; and when he is gone they will forget him altogether."

"He is your heir," said Nathaniel, "and will not readily be forgotten."

"He is not," was the emphatic reply.

"How! the world says as much," returned the Jew.

"The world may say so, and what it pleases into the bargain; but I can leave behind me certain information which will show good authority for questioning that youth's right and title."

"Can I believe mine ears!" exclaimed the usurer in astonishment.

"Yes—you may: on my honour the information I give you is correct," answered the baronet.

"Then we must indeed let him depart. Does he know as much himself?—you will excuse the questions I put to you."

"He is aware of the—to him—sad circumstance," answered Mornay.

"It were useless to let him linger in a gaol," remarked the Jew.

"Hark ye, Mr. Nathaniel—I have not yet meddled in the business—that is, not before to-day—I have had other things to attend to, and have been considering deeply of the matter. The truth is, my name is frequently connected with his—he being my supposed heir: scandalous tongues would cease talking, were his infamous head hidden in a foreign land."

"In France, perhaps? He will there have scope for his swindling propensities."

"In Iceland, if he could!" ejaculated Sir George Mornay impatiently.

"'Tis well: but I must speak plainly," said the Jew. "If I procure his liberty, am I to expect any consideration on your part, concerning the pecuniary affairs existing between us? for really my losses have been much more severe than you can imagine."

"I promise you," replied the baronet, "that you shall not repent your interference in the matter. At the same time," he continued, assuming an air of carelessness, "you must not suppose that I myself attach much importance to Crawford's freedom: I always intended to pay you the money you advanced for my necessities; and as an earnest of my honourable intentions, here are a thousand pounds. In a few days I must leave London—my stay will not be long at the place whither I am going;—and I shall return possessed of means to raise a decent sum of money."

With these words he counted on the table bank-notes to the amount of a thousand pounds, much to the surprise and delight of Mr. Nathaniel, who had scarcely ever hoped to see a fraction of the loan he had raised for the use of the profligate baronet. After a few minutes' more conversation relative to Crawford, Sir George Mornay departed, and Nathaniel proceeded to the Bench to consult with the prisoner whom he had there immured.

But the reader must not imagine that Sir George Mornay was as careless as he desired to appear concerning the liberation of Crawford. Hitherto he had remained passive, not wishing to seem too anxious as to the affairs of the impostor; although in his heart, for reasons at present unknown, he fervently hoped that the lost young man would soon be out of the country.

James was not a little surprised when he saw the Jew enter his room in the King's Bench prison: and as a semi-smile played upon the lip of the

money-lender, his countenance brightened up, for he immediately fancied that some good purpose had caused this unexpected visit. He therefore welcomed him politely, begged him to be seated, and made several general observations, while Nathaniel addressed the youth with his usual ease, as if nothing had happened. He informed him of the particulars of the interview that had taken place between himself and Sir George Mornay the same morning: but James was not greatly astonished to learn that the haughty baronet had interested himself in his favour, although he had not actually expected any notice to be taken of him in that quarter.

"Excuse me, Mr. Crawford,—but you will acknowledge that I have not the slightest chance of being paid the vast sums I have lent you," said Nathaniel.

"Not the slightest—all is expended," was the candid—too candid reply.

"Into whose hands have the various amounts gone?" demanded the Jew.

"It were impossible to recapitulate the numberless individuals to whom I have lent, paid, and given money: one thing is very certain," said Crawford, "that all is gone."

"And if your freedom be procured," continued Mr. Nathaniel, "is it your intention to remain in the metropolis—or indeed, in any part of England?"

"No—certainly—I should instantly retire to the Continent, where I would conceal myself amongst the obscurest regions, so that men may forget such a being as myself ever existed."

"I told you that Sir George Mornay was partially your friend," cried the Jew abruptly.

"He has done me some kind acts," returned James with a bitter smile; "but he has also—"

"What?—proceed!" said Nathaniel, remarking that the youth hesitated.

"Nothing, nothing: what I was going to say is and must be totally irrelevant to the subject of our present discourse."

"You have seen Sir George Mornay often?" said Nathaniel, the mysterious encounter of the baronet with the impostor at his house still dwelling in his memory, and exciting his curiosity.

"I am grateful for the interest he takes in my present affairs," returned Crawford, evading a reply to the Jew's question.

"You are his heir, Mr. Crawford: that accounts for his solicitude in your welfare," remarked Nathaniel, casting a searching glance on the countenance of the young prisoner.

"Wherefore these queries—for such they are," returned James, blushing deeply: "you know I am his heir—I am notoriously his heir," he added, with that strange sentiment of human pride which is so invariably the lowest and the highest individual's characteristic; while the Jew laughed involuntarily, well knowing the extent of the falsehood just uttered.

"I shall, therefore," continued Nathaniel, as if only pondering on the interference of Sir George Mornay in Crawford's favour, "assemble your creditors, and procure your liberty as speedily as possible. A momentary excitement forced me to arrest you; but since your relative, *if a relative he be*, has interested himself in your behalf, we must settle the affair as amicably as we can."

"Now, Mr. Nathaniel," said Crawford, "you have told me at different times many anecdotes connected with yourself; you have made me aware of a great deal of your former history: will you satisfy my curiosity exactly as to your present mysterious mode of conduct with regard to my business?"

"Certainly—speak!" said the Jew.

"You plunge me in a gaol," proceeded James; "justly, I confess: you keep me here some time without apparently condescending to notice me;—then suddenly you come forward as my best friend. Whence this inconsistency?"

"Your questions are the result of curiosity well founded—I will reply to them. I put you into prison while wrath filled my bosom; my anger against you was inconceivable;—my passions, which are always violent, but transitory in their ebullitions, were aroused to their highest pitch of resentment. They gradually cooled; and reflection told me I had done wrong—not towards you, but towards myself. I had exposed my own profession too much to the world, in addition to the great losses I had sustained; I should have offended Sir George Mornay, had I not listened to his wishes; and that would have injured me still more deeply: because in the first place, he would never have reimbursed the money I had advanced, which he has promised to do, should I behave well towards you: and secondly, his influence is too great for me to cope with him by disobliging him in this affair. Moreover, Mr. Crawford, I wish you out of the country: you have nearly ruined me, and you never will nor can do me any good; the whole concern is a sore topic for me—and I wish it to be crushed—stifled!"

"I thank you for the explanation," observed James.

"You owe me one in return," said the Jew.

"Speak: if it be in my power, I will answer you frankly," replied James.

"You know more of Sir George Mornay than you choose to say; else wherefore your embarrassment, and his anger, when you met at my house? Either you had seen him before, or you had not: if the former, why did you request to be allowed an opportunity of catching a glimpse of him? and if the latter, whence arose your emotion at the sight of him?"

"Can you wonder that I should experience a variety of feelings, when I cast my eyes upon the man who had acted so harshly towards my family? Suppose an idea of resentment arose within me;—suppose I wished to rush forth from my hiding-place, and accuse him of cruelty to my family;—suppose that there be secrets between us, am not I afraid of his power to crush me, should I reveal them? need I not dread his influence as well as yourself? does he not provide for my family? and ought I to endanger the loss of their pension, by irritating the donor?"

"That is reasonable," remarked Nathaniel carelessly, well knowing the sophistry of the youth's replies, and despatching of obtaining direct answers to his questions.

"It is almost certain, then, that my liberty may be effected?" said Crawford, desirous of turning the conversation.

"That must now depend upon yourself. Swear in as solemn a manner as you can, that you will

leave the country, and to-morrow morning you shall be free—I will answer for so much."

"Most faithful is my promise," rejoined James; "but may I not say a parting farewell to my injured mother and sisters, ere I quit my native land—never to return?"

"No—it is unnecessary: your mother, you told me, is in Guernsey; your elder sister is with her; and your younger sister is in the bosom of a respectable family, where she is kindly treated, and where she wants for nothing."

"Then my infamy, my disgrace," exclaimed the youth passionately, one ray of tender feeling returning to his bosom, like a sudden flash of vivid and evanescent lightning breaking over a night that had long been dark and gloomy; "my infamy, then, has not materially injured my unfortunate family?"

"Your position has only afflicted them in mind, I believe," returned Nathaniel: "But enough of that: you will consent to the proposal I have made, and you will quit the kingdom?"

"I will, I will," answered the youth, delighted to have a prospect of freedom once again before him.

"To-morrow, then," said the Jew, "I shall call here again. Good bye for the present: I can never in heart be your friend; but I will never seek to be your enemy. Do not, Mr. Crawford, on account of what I say, attribute the interest I at present take in your affairs, to any goodness or disposition in me. I do not desire to have credit for such silly feelings: circumstances alone compel me to treat you leniently, and with clemency—otherwise my revenge should have had its course."

Having uttered these words, Nathaniel rose and took his departure.

The remainder of the day was passed by the Jew amongst the various tradesmen who had lodged detainers against Crawford; and to the unvaried question of, "Wherefore Mr. Nathaniel had recommended his custom?" the constant reply was, that he had been duped as well as they, and had experienced losses considerably greater than all theirs put together;—that if he, who surely ought to be paid the first, and secured before the others, (as his debt consisted of good money lent,) were willing to forego the claim, and allow the delinquent to obtain his liberty, how much sooner should they give up prosecuting an useless and unproductive suit!

These plausible arguments had the desired effect: one and all finally consented to withdraw the detaining writs. Thus Fortune again seemed to smile on Crawford, who had begun to think she would frown on him until death.

Having secured the good-will of those individuals upon whom the liberation of Crawford chiefly depended, Mr. Nathaniel hurried to Sir George Mornay's dwelling, and informed him of the success he had experienced in his endeavours to promote his wishes. The baronet was most particular in his questions as to whether James had firmly resolved to leave the kingdom. On receiving satisfactory answers, he gave Mr. Nathaniel two hundred pounds to remit to the youth, with an intimation that a similar sum would be allowed yearly, to be paid in quarterly portions, so long as Crawford should reside abroad.

Affairs being so far arranged, the persevering Nathaniel returned to his own home; and in the morning hastened to the Bench, to set James at liberty. This was speedily done; and with the money which Sir George Mornay had supplied him, in his pocket, he left the prison in company with Nathaniel, and everjoyed at obtaining his liberty once again. That same evening the crafty Jew attended him to the coach-office, and saw him safely on the road for Southampton, whence he was to embark for Dieppe, as he preferred that route to France rather than the one by way of Dover—an arrangement his liberator did not a moment object to.

Arrived at a hotel in Southampton, and seated over a bottle of wine in the coffee-room, James found all the events of the last few months come rushing back to his mind. Now that the delightful dream of ambition had fled—now that his grandeur, his magnificence, his reputed opulence were at an end—now that he was no longer courted by the gay, the noble, and the fashionable—now that, instead of being considered one amongst the fortunate and successful of this world, he had become enrolled in the number of earth's lowest and meanest denizens, bearing a ban which must ever follow him;—amid such ideas as these, the thought of his mother and his sisters, whom he had once so tenderly, so passionately loved, returned to his memory with renewed force;—and in spite of the promises he had so solemnly made to Mr. Nathaniel, to embark for France as speedily as possible on his arrival at Southampton, he resolved to change the plan of his journey, and the place of his destination, in favour of Guernsey. There, without actually presenting himself to the view of his afflicted mother, he could inform himself of every particular relative to her health, inquire after Emily, and, in a word, make himself aware of all that concerned them.

This determination being finally settled in his own mind, he inquired when a vessel was likely to sail for Guernsey, and finding that two or three days must elapse ere he could put his scheme in execution, he rested quietly till the favourable moment arrived.

At length the morning dawned:—it was cold, dreary, and flakes of snow fell thickly. Throwing his cloak around him, he hurried to the quay, and in a short space stood upon the deck of the vessel. As he climbed up the side, another passenger, who stood on the prow of the ship, noticed him, and started when he discovered the features of young Crawford—muttering to himself, “That fellow will deceive the devil, if he have a chance! Instead of being bound for France, as I fancied, behold him on his way to Guernsey!”

But the embarrassment and vexation of this individual were not remarked; for he speedily enveloped himself in a large cloak and pulled his hat very far down, apparently to hide his face. It was evident he did not wish to be recognised by the impostor.

Presently the packet set sail with a favourable breeze; and the stranger, muffled in his capacious cloak, kept his station at the prow, and gazed over the bulwarks upon the green waves that danced by the vessel's side in sportive play.

When the ship reached the harbour of St. Pierre-Porte, this mysterious individual anxiously

watched the direction that was taken by Crawford; and finding he had by some accident chosen Payne's Hotel, he instantly followed a waiter belonging to Marshall's, determined to avoid as well as he could, an interview with the impostor!

CHAPTER LVI.

Et, en effet, tout ce qui peut servir à donner une énergie sauvage aux passions d'homme était en ce moment réuni chez lui pour exalter tous ses sentimens!

DUNCOURT.

* * * * *

“SINCE you are determined to investigate the matter, sir, I must of necessity inform you of all I know concerning the young lady, whom I ere now so accurately described, and whom you declare to be the daughter of a particular friend. But as I hope you intend to turn to no evil use the disclosures I shall make, as I cannot but suspect you wish the young lady all the good in the world,—you being, as you say, an intimate acquaintance of her family, I am not very unwilling to relate the whole matter candidly and openly.”

“Do, I beseech you, Miss Payne,—and that speedily too.”

“A little patience, sir, I beg of you; and you shall be satisfied. You must know first, that from the moment she set foot in this house, I took a marvellous interest in the pretty girl; she was so kind in her manners, so modest, so fascinating, so meek, and so unhappy! Many and many were the tears that rolled down the poor child's cheeks, during the short time she was here; but her patience in suffering—! mean mental suffering, sir,—was astonishing for one so young!”

“Indeed, Miss Payne,” said Crawford, leaning forward, and lending an attentive ear to all the good-natured landlady was saying, “I am in the utmost suspense to become acquainted with the nature of the disclosure you alluded to.”

“It is short, sir;”—and after a brief preface, Miss Payne related how Emily arrived at the hotel, without any kind of luggage—how she was so very wretched—and how Mrs. Pembroke came and took her into the country. “At the house of that benevolent lady,” added the worthy hostess, “she gave birth to a child: I was there last Sunday for an hour, and saw both the young lady and her mother, who has—”

“A child!” exclaimed Crawford, in astonishment.

“Yes, sir: she was in the family way, it appears, when she came over; and now that her faithless husband—”

“Her husband! how—what? is Emily married, then?” exclaimed James, all this information coming like a whirlwind upon him, leaving him in a state of perplexity, doubt, and darkness.

“To be sure she is married, sir—Mrs. Pembroke is well acquainted with all the circumstances; but I hope I have not said too much.”

“Not in the least! She is really married, is she?” cried Crawford, still musing upon the novel tidings he had just heard.

“Ah! ah!” said Miss Payne, with a compla-

cent smile, as if she had discovered something wonderful and important; "I see how it is—I see it now—it was a run-away match, and the family knew nothing of it!"

"Perhaps!" said Crawford; and he fell into a train of thought, which, however, threw no satisfactory light upon the subject.

That his sister had been seduced, he did not for a moment fancy—that the young lady Miss Payne alluded to was Emily, he could scarcely doubt—that his sister had married clandestinely, he did not deem probable:—hence arose a violent inclination to make himself directly aware of the truth, if possible.

Since his arrival in the island the day before, he had questioned the good landlady very closely concerning his mother and sister; and so far had he acquired an insight into their present situation, their state of health, their retired habits, &c. that a considerable portion of that curiosity which led him to Guernsey was already gratified. The mystery of Emily's having become a mother, he was now determined to investigate; for he doubted not but that a great deal connected with her had been concealed from him. We should here notice that he had not given his real name at the hotel; neither had he represented himself as any thing more than the friend of the ladies he so anxiously sought news of,—fearful lest unpleasant events might ensue, either detrimental to himself, or to them, should his character and name transpire.

Perplexed and uncertain how to act, he asked a variety of questions, which Miss Payne readily satisfied if she could, or declared her inability to solve them, if she could not:—we mean, she spoke with candour and frankness.

"There is, while I think of it," said the landlady, "a young gentleman in the island, who until within this last week resided at my hotel. He has since taken a small house in the country, near that of Mrs. Pembroke, with whom he is very intimate, I fancy; as he visits there daily, and passes the greater part of his time there, to my certain knowledge. Perhaps he might give you better information than I am able to do."

"His name?" inquired James eagerly.

"His name is Hunter, sir," was the reply.

"Good heavens! Mr. Hunter here in Guernsey! a pale, melancholy, emaciated, but genteel young man—a surgeon?"

"The same, sir. Do you know him?"

"Well—intimately, Miss Payne," returned the impostor. But you can—you must do me a material service! Does he know that I am here?"

"No, sir: he has not been at the hotel since the day on which he left it for good," was the answer.

"Then he must not be informed of my arrival in the island, if he should come—do you understand? I have good and just reasons for all I do, and for all I ask of you! My interest, and the interest of the young lady, as well as the interest of her mother—of a whole family, in fine—"

"You shall be obeyed, sir: it is not for me to scrutinize the business, nor question the actions of gentlemen honouring my hotel with their custom. Your orders shall be attended to, I repeat; and any thing I can do to serve you shall be done with pleasure."

Here the conversation ended; and James re-

tired to his apartment to meditate upon the various topics of his discourse with Miss Payne. He was determined to procure an interview with Emily—to learn from his sister's own lips all that had befallen her since they last met, and to find sympathy for his misfortunes in her affection. The day was yet young—it was only three o'clock:—what if he were now to walk out in the direction of Mrs. Pembroke's dwelling? With this idea full in his mind, he seized his hat, hurried on his cloak, and possessed of a sufficient clue to discover the road thither, he sallied forth to the vicinity of that asylum which his sister had found in the sad day of tribulation.

With unwearied step he pushed forward, and at length came in sight of the shrubbery before the house, which he immediately recognised from the description given of it by his landlady. In this shrubbery he halted, and reconnoitred the dwelling. No one appeared, of whom he could ask a single question. The shades of night fell—but the moon rose;—still James as yet had had no opportunity of gaining the smallest information concerning his sister: he felt disappointed, anxious, and unhappy.

Fatigued, cold, and wretched, he was about to depart, when the front door opened, and a female figure issued forth upon the lawn, as if to take a momentary breath of air. James sprang forward—he had recognised the person of his sister:—she was about to re-enter the dwelling—another instant, and she would have been gone—when he stood before her!

"Emily—dear Emily, do not be terrified;—I am your brother!" he said in a hurried whisper.

She uttered not a syllable, but sank senseless into his arms. Alarmed for her safety, he was uncertain how to act, not daring to leave her to seek for water, or call for assistance; but to his joy she opened her eyes, and asked him in a faint voice how he came thither? Supporting her to a seat, which happened to be hard by, he told her in a few syllables enough to satisfy her immediate curiosity. She said not one reproachful word—she breathed not a single rebuke against him for his misdeeds—she felt that she also was so culpable!—she remembered likewise that her mother had never informed James of her frailty:—but she now experienced a secret wish to tell him all, for never had he appeared more dear to her! They had both been guilty—they were together after a long absence—they had both sinned—and they now felt and found sympathy with each other. She was in a brother's arms—a brother she had always loved; and in hurried words she gave him to understand, that she had become a parent without having been a wife.

"And who," exclaimed Crawford passionately, "who was the vile wretch that dared abuse the confidence of my sister, and take advantage of the innocent affection she bore him?"

In a whisper, she muttered the name of ARNOLD!

"Arnold,—Emily!" cried James—"you know not what you say—'tis impossible, utterly impossible! Arnold—did you say it? repeat it once more, Emily, that I may understand you! Was it Arnold?"

"It was, dear brother," returned Emily in a solemn voice. "He followed me to my aunt's



at Southampton—with specious tales he beguiled me—I fell—and, oh! the fruit of our love is in that house,” she added, pointing towards Mrs. Pembroke’s abode.

“Now then,” ejaculated Crawford, all the callousness he had long felt for the welfare of his family vanishing in an instant, while a deep sense of the dishonour done to it, and a resolution to avenge the wrongs it had suffered at the hands of one he knew too well, took place of the departed apathy in his mind—“’t is for my arm to lay the foul seducer low. Hitherto amidst the luxuries of London, I had forgotten all but mine own peculiar interests: now—now——”

“What? speak, for God’s sake, James,” cried Emily, clinging to her brother, and embracing him fondly.

“Nothing—be tranquil, Emily, I beseech you!

—Will not our mother notice your lengthened absence?”

“Yes, if I remain longer. But will you not see her, James?” she asked.

“Not to-night, Emily,” replied Crawford. “Keep secret my presence in Guernsey, I charge you; remember now that you have a brother; and though we have both been guilty, dear Emily——”

“Speak not of that; but think of your mother!”

“Listen, Emily,” said James, in a firm tone of voice; “to-morrow morning early, can you meet me in the grove again?”

“I can, if it be fine. Name your hour; and since you seem obstinately bent upon not seeing your mother——”

“Call not that obstinacy, which necessity prompts,” interrupted the youth: “my refusal to

comply with your wishes is for the good of us all. To-morrow, at ten o'clock, I will tell you more—much more than you fancy you have to learn. I will reveal to you the most extraordinary discovery I made in London, relative to Arnold. I will confide to you secrets of vital importance; I will make you my friend, Emily—my counsellor—my associate in ideas—my every thing;—for unless you look on me with kindness, *none* will!"

"Say not so! And as for Arnold," continued the afflicted girl, weeping, "let him be safe—let him go unpunished, for the sake of his innocent child!"

Crawford would have replied; but the appearance of a servant at the front door obliged him to bid his sister a hasty farewell, repeating his injunctions for her to keep her appointment at ten o'clock; having done which, he stole speedily away, in a very different state of mind from that which he had experienced for a long time.

Till his arrival at Southampton, he had scarcely ever thought of his family: till the interview with Emily, his feelings of affection for any one of its members had been deadened—subdued. Now all his energies were aroused: not only was his attachment to his mother and sisters revived, but his jealousy was excited, lest any one should wrong them with impunity. He determined to appear as their vindicator, as their protector; and in spite of the crimes of which he had been guilty, he resolved to stand before the world in a new light—as the challenger of a high and haughty individual! For he knew much more of the real nature of those wrongs they had endured, than they possibly could be aware of. The promises he had made to Nathaniel were now forgotten: he swore within himself to return to London as soon as he could, after his next interview with Emily, from whom he purposed to elicit a full and complete account of all the various arts which he doubted not had been put in practice to seduce her.

That was a sleepless night for both James and his sister. The one, in his hotel, lay awake pondering on the events the last two days had revealed to him:—the other, at Mrs. Pembroke's house, pressed a sleepless pillow, for she was agitated with a thousand conflicting reflections, and eagerly awaited the approach of morning.

At last, that morning dawned—fine, fresh, and clear. Emily arose hastily, and descended to the breakfast-parlour, where her mother, who was now recovered, and Mrs. Pembroke had already met; for they were in the habit of rising early, as they invariably retired at a good hour to their slumbers.

Presently Hunter joined the party unexpectedly, as he seldom called till mid-day. For the first time since she had known him, his presence was a subject of annoyance to Emily—she was fearful of experiencing some difficulty in finding an opportunity to escape his society, and quit the house immediately after the morning's repast. She, however, concealed her embarrassment, and joined occasionally in the conversation that was passing. The whole party were standing at the window, gazing out upon the lawn, and waiting till the servant should have placed breakfast on the table.

During a short pause in the discourse, the gate,

which opened from the road to the lawn, by the side of the shrubbery, was heard to creak upon its hinges. Emily threw an anxious look that way, screamed loudly, and sank upon the floor;—for the glance she gave in that direction fell not upon James as she had expected, but upon the well—too well-known form of Arnold!

The others with one accord instantly looked towards the gate.

"Almighty God!" cried Hunter, "here is the villain I have so long desired to encounter!"—but ere he issued forth to wreak his vengeance upon the seducer, he stopped to assist the fainting girl,—while Mrs. Crawford, almost distracted, was incapable of composing her feelings.

Mrs. Pembroke was the last who spoke: her senses almost fled at this unexpected stroke of calamity; and in a moment of inadvertency, the effect of so dreadful a shock as this that her mind received, she told the fatal secret she would willingly have retained in her own breast,—exclaiming wildly, "Good Heavens! there is Sir George Mornay—my husband!"

"Sir George Mornay!" exclaimed Hunter, catching at these words, and starting up, forgetful of Emily's situation,—indeed, of every thing save the all-absorbing syllables that met his ears.

"Yes—yes—since I have said it—'tis Sir George Mornay—and he is my husband—the husband whom I loved—and who has deceived me!"

"Sir George Mornay, the seducer of my daughter!" echoed Mrs. Crawford wildly.

"Great God, have mercy upon us!" murmured the unfortunate Emily, who had partially recovered from her swoon, and had awoke in time—for her torpor was only momentary—to hear those fatal words issue from the lips of Lady Mornay.

"Sir George Mornay," continued Hunter in astonishment—"Sir George Mornay and Arnold the same person! Oh! no wonder that my search was unsuccessful in London—no wonder that this worthy lady," alluding to her whom he had known as Mrs. Pembroke, "took so deep an interest in the daughter of her husband's cousin! But now," he continued passionately, while an unnatural hectic glow flushed his cheek, "now shall all her wrongs be avenged—all the injuries of Emily be atoned for!"

Having uttered these words, forgetful of a wife's feelings, and never dreaming that Sir George Mornay was still an object of interest to Miss Crawford as the father of her child,—without another thought than that which prompted him to confront the baronet directly,—for it was indeed too true that Sir George Mornay and Arnold were one and the same,—Hunter rushed into the open air, but sought in vain for the object of his indignation.

Supposing that the profligate villain had probably entered the house, he once more ran within—and asked the servants whether a stranger had passed the door. To these questions he was answered in the negative; and once more giving vent to the rage of excited feelings, without heeding the whisperings of reason, he sallied forth—looking about in vain for Sir George Mornay!

Let us pause for a moment, and relate the circumstances that must account for the mysterious disappearance of that individual who had thus so long, and so successfully deceived the family of the Crawfords—who had seduced under a feigned

name the confiding Emily—who had inveigled James within the trammels of his specious web of deceit—who had made him and many of others the agents of his nefarious plans, and the tools of his artifices!

Desirous of being true to his appointment, so as not to keep his sister waiting, and anxious to hear from her lips a correct detail of all that had happened since he had seen her at the cottage near Bagshot, James arose early, and set out on his road towards the *rendezvous* he had named on the previous evening. Arrived in the shrubbery, he found by his watch that he was somewhat too early; so choosing a secluded spot and a sloping bank, he sat down, despite of the cold, to chase away the intervening minutes as well as he could with his reflections, till the appearance of his sister; and as the trees were chiefly evergreens, there was little danger of him being observed.

Sooner, however, than he had anticipated, was his reverie broken by the creaking of the little gate, and the sound of footsteps. He jumped up, and looked cautiously forth from his place of concealment; but, oh! judge of his astonishment, when his eyes fell upon the person of Sir George Mornay;—for it was he, we might have before said, who had so scrupulously avoided an interview with James in the vessel which conveyed them both to Guernsey.

With the wrongs of Emily fresh in his memory—with all the evil that the baronet had done to his family and himself,—with the recollection of his own ruin, brought on by one who had suffered his father to live in obscurity and poverty,—every softer, every moderate feeling laid aside, James sprang forward, and confronted the abandoned seducer in his path.

"Ah!" said Mornay, with an assumed coolness after a momentary agitation—for he would as soon have seen Lucifer as the youthful impostor at that moment—"you here, Crawford, eh? I knew you were in Guernsey, and sought you all yesterday, instead of attending to more important business:—but my search was fruitless; and I supposed you had sailed for St. Malo."

"Now you have found me," returned the youth, fire flashing from his eyes; "and it remains for my arm to teach you—"

"Your arm!" cried Mornay with a contemptuous sneer; "your arm! What! the arm, which on that fatal night, when by the mile-stone—"

"Hush—hush!" cried James in agony: "the very ground has ears to drink in greedily the bare mention of so deadly a deed!"

"Follow me, then," said Sir George Mornay quickly, seeing the youth was once more submissive to his will, and not wishing to have a disturbance in the vicinity of his injured wife's dwelling.

With somewhat diminished ardour, but still with a dogged resolution to avenge the multiplicity of injuries heaped upon his head, and on the heads of his family by Sir George Mornay, Crawford obeyed the extraordinary individual he had thus so singularly encountered.

They stepped hastily from the inclosure into the road, where a hired carriage waited at a little distance, the gate not being wide enough to admit it.

"Step in," said the baronet.

James entered the vehicle; Mornay followed; and in a moment the chaise was rolling rapidly along on its way back to St. Peter's-Port.

CHAPTER LVII.

Man 's a mighty being, when his pride,
By fortune f'vour'd and supremely blest.
In all its boundless wants is gratified,
And when his deadliest passions are at rest
But mark him when pale Sorrow is his guest,
When blighted Love, or wreck'd Ambition sting,
When Jealousy or Envy fill his breast,
And Ruin o'er him waves his sable wing,—
Is mortal longer great?—Where is a meaner thing!

THE scene with which the last chapter concluded only occupied the space of a minute or two, however long it may have taken to relate it.

It is not wonderful, then, that Henry Hunter's search after Sir George Mornay was vain and fruitless. The young surgeon returned to the house for the purpose of inquiring after Emily, whom he had left in a precarious state; and he found the three ladies in a condition of mind better to be conjectured than described. Let us, however, devote a short space to an analysis of those thoughts which dwelt in the bosom of each—retaining them all dumb, except to the utterance of sighs, and causing the morning meal to remain untouched.

Mrs. Pembroke was obliged to submit to the galling reflection, that she had cherished, although ignorantly, and innocently, the *mistress* of her husband—and that the illegitimate child of him to whom she had been united years ago in the sacred bonds of matrimony, was at that moment in her house, existing under the very roof which should be the last to cover it!

Mrs. Crawford called to mind all the indignities her husband had experienced at the hands of Sir George Mornay—she remembered the overbearing style of many of his letters—she had terrible ideas of the past, when she dwelt upon the villain Arnold's specious tales, his long mysterious behaviour—mysterious now no more—his detestable hypocrisy, and his damnable artifices to make her wretched. She reflected how grossly she had been deceived, how her son had been ruined by his shameful machinations, and how her daughter Emily—poor deluded girl!—had fallen a victim to his wiles.

Emily, in the interim, was rapidly revolving in her mind all the scenes of the morning, and of the day before. She dreaded lest James and Sir George Mornay should meet: but she could not immediately leave the house and repair to the grove, to keep her appointment. Her absence would be noticed at such a crisis as extraordinary; it would be thought that she desired to see in private her former lover—and moreover her mind was too little at ease, and her agonised feelings too much overpowered her, to admit of her quitting the apartment, even had she been free to do so. Moreover, she herself remembered, that she, the mistress of Sir George Mornay, was an inmate of his wife's house, partaking of her hospitality—the hospitality of that wife who had suffered ill-treatment, who had experienced indignities, and had tolerated with patience unmerited reproaches

at the hands of him who had thus enacted so astonishing a part on the stage of life. She pondered on the vast impropriety, nay—the impossibility of staying any longer in the house of Lady Mornay; and she ventured not to raise her eyes towards the countenance of that afflicted lady, who had cherished, who had been as a mother to her.—Oh! this was the severest pang, the greatest humiliation her poor lacerated heart had ever yet felt!

Hunter had returned from his fruitless search; and throwing himself upon a chair, he declared in a few words that Sir George Mornay was nowhere to be found. This assertion was a matter of wonder to those who with fear and alarm had awaited the entrance of the dreaded baronet:—no remark was however made; a solemn silence pervaded the whole party, interrupted only by occasional sighs and moans from the bosoms of the wretched group, whose distress was all caused by *one man*!

Hunter forgot his own enfeebled state of health—his own sorrows—his own miseries: he thought but of Emily and Mornay, and of the vengeance he would speedily take upon the head of the baronet whom it was his firm intention to inquire after in the evening at St. Pierre-Port. At present he did not dare leave the house for any length of time, fearful of evil happening to the inmates from their extreme depression, and not without a hope that Sir George Mornay might still make his appearance.

An hour passed away, and Emily was dreadfully alarmed lest James should be uneasy because she did not keep her appointment. Unable to support the suspense her terrors excited, she arose and quitted the room, while those she left behind, even amidst their own peculiar woes, felt pity for the miseries of the fair but unhappy girl!

She hurried to her chamber, and cast one look upon her sleeping babe:—will the reader believe that for an instant she loathed the sight of it, calmly and placidly as it lay reposing—that she felt a momentary disgust for it, as the evidence of her shame? But in another instant this strange feeling departed—she knew that she was reasoning unjustly: bursting into an agony of tears, she embraced the sinless little being, who had thus so strongly reminded her of her frailty! That infant at least was innocent, and demanded a mother's care.

Weak and feeble, she descended the stairs, and sought the shrubbery; but James was not there. The printed marks of footsteps were nevertheless visible upon the bank. With a heavy heart she returned to the house, and again sought her chamber, there to give vent to the tide of her griefs, to hazard vain conjectures on the absence of her brother, and to seek consolation, if possible, in the innocent society of her child.

Meantime the carriage had arrived at St. Pierre-Port. While it was still on its way, not a word was uttered by either Crawford or Sir George Mornay: but that interval, which gave ample leisure for thought, was one of the deepest interest to both.

Sir George Mornay saw that he must do something decisive to be entirely rid of James Crawford. He knew full well the influence he had over him, when he alluded to the fatal night often before mentioned. Not that he had any peculiar

hold on the young man's safety, without involving his own, as connected with the mysterious period so frequently spoken of: it was more a check upon his feelings—a word that could strike him dumb—a reminiscence which chilled his blood, harrowed up his soul, and made his heart sink within him. But there was also another material fact associated with the events of that night—a fact which Crawford had yet to learn. The baronet thought that by unfolding it to him, the very nerves of James would give way, his energies would fail, his limbs would tremble, and he would be entirely in his power, to be disposed of as he pleased—so instantaneous was to be the effect of the communication, concentrating all the youth's ideas in one point, and leaving him no scope, no room, no capability for other reflections!

Crawford, on the contrary, marvelled what Sir George Mornay was about to do; but he determined to wait patiently the event of the proceedings that he might adopt; for there was still in the youth's mind a dogged determination to be no longer trifled with—to be no more the football with which the individual, who had ruined him, should play at will.

Alas! little did he think of the horrors preparing for him.

Arrived at the hotel, and seated in the apartment which Sir George Mornay, who preserved a strict *incognito*, occupied, a long silence ensued: it was at length broken by the baronet.

"Crawford," said he, "I never thought we should meet again. As it is—as we have thus unfortunately encountered each other—it is my intention to relate those portions of my life which involve much connected with your family, and which will throw a light upon a subject regarding which you would have perhaps never been acquainted, had you stood by the promise you so solemnly gave to Nathaniel, on your liberation from the King's Bench."

"And that history, which you are about to relate to me," said Crawford in a hurried tone of voice,—“does it involve the narrative of the arts, the wiles, the stratagems you must have made use of to deceive my sister?”

"Ah!" said Mornay; "you have then seen Emily!"

"I have," returned James abruptly.

"Where is she?" asked the baronet in a hurried voice.

"In Guernsey—in this very island!" was the answer.

"In Guernsey—where?"

"Where—no matter where: proceed in what you have to make me acquainted with. I have no time to waste in idle trifling, nor replying to queries unconnected with our present business. Proceed, I say; and afterwards we will settle the long account that remains to be regulated between us!"

"As you please, young man: Sir George Mornay never flinched from danger when his honour demanded his firmness to conduct him to action," returned the baronet proudly.

"Nor will James Crawford," exclaimed the youth firmly. "I have gone through that, during my short life," he continued, in a bitter voice, "which ought to nerve me to support any thing:—I have played a conspicuous part in the world—

my fame was short; but I will still appear before that world once more—not as the rank impostor, the tool of others, the dupe of designing men;—I will come forward as the avenger of my family's wrongs—of my sister's disgrace, and of my ruin!"

"As you please, I repeat," said the baronet with the utmost coolness, looking upon Crawford as a turbulent being whom he could tame at pleasure. "And now listen to the disclosures I am about to make to you. Perhaps," he added with a demoniac smile, "they may change your resolutions, and reduce you, James Crawford, to the submission of a lamb!"

"Ridiculous! impossible!" exclaimed the youth.

"Impossible! O foolish young man—thou knowest not the terrible statement thou hast yet to hear! Thine ears shall tingle—thy heart shall become red-hot iron within thee—thy limbs shall quiver—thy tongue shall remain speechless—thy feelings shall be harrowed up—and thy whole frame shall be convulsed with horror!"

"Do not seek to alarm me with visionary terrors!" cried the youth, although in reality startled at the impressive and emphatic manner in which Sir George Mornay uttered those awful words.

"Yes," continued the baronet, in a more moderate tone of voice, "yes—you must prepare yourself—you must hear truths at which the stoutest heart would sicken! You already deem yourself culpable—you deem me as guilty as yourself—I am guilty—but I have not *that* here, here!" he cried, striking his breast violently—"which you will have—which will congeal your vital blood—lessen the number of your days through remorse—plant thorns upon your pillow—make darkness to be dreaded—people your midnight hours with grisly phantoms! Despite your sophistry, despite your intellect, Crawford—I know your heart is timid at the foundation; I know it is only hardened by—by—"

"Speak, speak!" interrupted James, now dreadfully terrified at the baronet's manner, which was too serious not to be impressive. "speak—and let us end this scene as speedily as possible!"

"It will not end in joy for you—"

"Then you shall partake my calamities, whatever they may be! You enjoyed the profits of my prosperity—is it not fair, is it not just that you should be involved in all contingent miseries?"

"It may be fair—it may be just—it may be reasonable: and yet it shall not be so!" retorted Mornay in a tone of bitter mockery.

"And yet," said Crawford, with a shudder, "the events of that fatal night are as much connected with you as with me."

"At present you think so—listen to my tale." "I am prepared to hear all you have to relate," said the youth, exhibiting signs of impatience.

"We must have wine," exclaimed Sir George Mornay suddenly,—"wine to cool your parched lips—wine to refresh you, and recall your sinking spirits, when the important truth, which my history contains, is told."

With these words he rang the bell, and ordered a bottle of sherry, and a couple of glasses to be brought in. He filled them both to the brim;

then drew a pocket-book from his coat, and placed it on the table. These arrangements being made, he prepared to relate his diabolical narrative of crime and enormity.

James fixed his eyes keenly upon him, and listened with the most painful attention, while the baronet commenced his history, as follows.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Thus do I discover mysteries to such as have knowledge to comprehend them.

* they that have done evil shall be punished after their demerits—they shall be covered with shame—and none shall be able to protect them; they shall be as if a great part of the night had covered their countenances.
Al Koran—Chapter of Jona.

"If you suppose that the relation of this narrative, Crawford, can cause me a single pang, or awake a single sentiment of remorse within me, you are mistaken. A thirst for vengeance was to be gratified—and it has been! Deeply is it quenched at the fountain of tears which your family has shed: ruin, despair, and sorrow have overtaken you all—save Catherine. Her shall I leave scathless: my aims have been sufficiently accomplished; and if I at one time determined to make that girl as unhappy as the rest, by endeavouring to throw obstacles in the way of her union with Captain Stewart, now Lord Fanmore—it was because I wished to heap as much misery as possible upon the head of your mother. But she has had an ample share: I feel satisfied; and in future ye shall all be left in peace. At present, without preface, let me detail to you the various plans I have adopted to secure my revenge—to supply my long-ruined coffers—and to achieve those devices which were to raise the trophies of my fortunes on the ruin of your house.

"Your father and I were cousins—were school-boys together—and, what is more, we were friends. But in reality my disposition was ever at variance with his, although we generally contrived to maintain a good understanding between us. He was a year younger than myself—I being twenty at the period of which I am about to speak. That period was the origin of all our quarrels, and of all the terrible schemes of revenge I have conceived and put in practice against my departed cousin's family.

"You must know that not far from our college there dwelt a poor farmer, who by the sweat of his brow procured on a few acres of land a subsistence, scanty enough, God knows! for himself, his wife, and a daughter—an only child. That daughter, however, was as beautiful as an angel: methinks I see her now! She was only sixteen; and though clad in humble garments, though accustomed to hardship, and not unfrequently to toil—yet there was a certain delicacy in Rose, which won my heart. Yes, Crawford, I, whose heart you suppose to be adamant—I, whose brow you fancy to be flinty as the rocks of Arabia's lonely province—I loved her as sincerely as man could love—I doated upon the sound of her voice: I followed her footsteps—and for some time aspired to be rather pursuing a lady of fashion, difficult of access, than a girl of low

origin, who would gladly have become, perhaps, an honest ploughman's bride.

"Indeed, it was some time before I thought of seducing her: then the idea only came into my head, when I reflected on the impossibility of a marriage taking place between us. No sooner had that idea filled my mind, than I resolved to gratify my passion at any expense. I endeavoured to dazzle her with presents; but she turned only a cold regard upon me: I told her of my rank, and she smiled—I thought, in contempt. I proposed to take her away from her father's house, and live with her in private till I was of age, when I would provide for her handsomely, and see that she wanted nothing; but she rebuked me with scorn. I returned to the college, disgusted with myself, and at variance with all the world. My pride was wounded; and I thought but little of myself for a considerable time.

"At length I was determined to see her once more—I scarcely knew wherefore. Why should I again venture at the cottage of her father, since she evidently treated me with disdain? What could be the use of intruding myself on the notice of an obscure girl, who refused to receive my proffers? Yet I went.

"I was pacing the little orchard that joined the dwelling of the farmer, when I heard familiar voices in the neighbouring field. I listened—curiosity in me was ever alive:—to my dismay, I discovered a fatal truth. From the language of the girl, I found that my cousin—your father, Crawford—had succeeded in his suit;—nay more, had carried the prize, and had revelled in the delights of love with Rose. She was speaking of the danger of her disgrace being discovered, should she prove pregnant: suddenly I stood, my eyes flashing with indignation, before them!

"It is impossible to describe the consternation caused by my inauspicious presence. Rose fainted; your father, who, though only a boy, possessed a fine spirit, demanded the reason of such a rude interruption. My rage knew no bounds: I caught him by the collar of his coat—a violent struggle ensued—but we parted, each in an inexpressible degree of wrath.

"Children as we were, our minds were manly: and behold! the next morning a meeting ensued—we fought with foils, sharpened at their points;—at that period my blood boiled in my veins more violently than now at riper years; and rage blinded me. Your father was more cool; and the result was in his favour; for I was desperately wounded in the arm. Thus defeated in love and in war, mortified feelings for a long time prevented a cure. But when I heard that the unfortunate cause of our dispute, the ruined Rose, had proved with child, and died in childbed, to the lasting misery of her parents—when I heard that your father, Crawford, had quitted the college almost broken-hearted, by the consent of his guardians, a part of my thirst for vengeance was assuaged, and I speedily recovered from the effects of my wound.

"Within my mind, however, still ranted a deep sense of the insults I had sustained—or so I construed my cousin's conduct. When I became possessed of my fortune, on my attaining my majority,—when I had it in my power to benefit your father I scorned all advances towards

a reconciliation, and gave him to understand that I would be his eternal foe. To add to my vexations, he married a person without fortune, and without rank. At that period I was aristocratic in my notions; and this union added fresh fuel to feed my incensed feelings. But I did not persecute actively, save by an occasional insulting letter: for the most part I revenged myself passively, at that time, by refusing to have the slightest personal communication with him, and by withholding all pecuniary assistance. A wife and young family subdued his proud spirit, and often compelled him to address me:—his epistles were treated with contempt.

"Shortly after this inauspicious union had taken place between your father and mother, James, I married a lady, whom I loved only for the wealth she possessed; for I am not obliged to be delicate or punctilious in relating my history to you—you who have been guilty of a thousand crimes yourself—nay, do not start, since I was the promoter of, or the partaker in, the majority of them.

"But with regard to my matrimonial speculation. The event of it, as you already know, was not more felicitous than the commencement appeared to prophesy. Whether it were my fault or not, I do not choose to particularise: there are so many secrets between a man and wife, of which the world is entirely ignorant, that the innocent one of the two is as frequently blamed for cruelty and ill-treatment as the other, who is really guilty. Not that I wish you to suppose I care in the least degree for the opinions of the world, as to this matter you know I am not annoyed by trifles. Be that as it may—my private family concerns regard not you, Crawford: suffice it to say, that some years ago we separated by mutual consent, after having made certain pecuniary arrangements, equally conducive to the benefit of both. But my funds were almost entirely exhausted: my fortune was never large—and I could with difficulty keep up two establishments, one at Portland Place and the other at Kensington—the same where we once called, the night that Captain Stewart, now Lord Fannmore, was robbed of his pocket-book. I lived much upon credit, upon gambling, and on what the punctilious portion of the world calls dishonesty.

"I was in the habit of occasionally visiting several known resorts for gamblers at this time for the purpose of inveigling them to play; but I always preserved a strict *incognito*, which was not difficult, as no respectable people, with whom I was acquainted, or by whom I was likely to be recognised, ever frequented the places of which I was speaking. At one of these houses, about four years ago, I met with Rivingstone. We gradually became intimate together; our discourse grew daily more connected with the state of our affairs, I made no secret of my embarrassments; and he on his part candidly confessed, over a bottle of wine, that he had existed for a length of time by means far from lawful. How do you suppose the result turned out? I accompanied him, by agreement, upon an expedition on the Hounslow road. He only knew me as Arnold: that was the name I assumed in my nocturnal rambles. We returned not with our purses empty; and the plunder was divided at Rivingstone's cottage at Hounslow.

"For some time did we pursue this kind of life with considerable success. One morning I received a letter in Portland Place from your father. I had scarcely thought of him for some years: yet my vengeance was not forgotten—it had only lain dormant: now it awoke with renewed vigour. I remembered that he or his hated family would be my heirs—that he was blessed with a smiling offspring, while I was childless and unhappy. I felt that he had prospered in the world more than I—because he was not reduced to the actual necessities that often oppressed me. In this letter he made fresh advances towards a reconciliation. I chuckled when I saw that he desired it so earnestly. He informed me of his wish to see me—he added that he had come to town on purpose to embrace the companion of his early years—he declared that all animosity had long been forgotten on his part—he referred to our early friendship, and concluded by declaring how happy he should be to hold the hand of Sir George Mornay in his own!

"'I will reduce this individual to the lowest abyss of misery,' said I within myself; 'he has recalled to my mind all the insults I received from him when a boy; and now will I humble him to the dust.'

"While I was in the midst of my meditations, I remembered that I had an appointment with Rivingstone; and postponing any decision as to my mode of conduct regarding your father's letter, I hurried to the place of meeting. He was not true to his engagement—I forgot the excuse he made the next time I saw him; but I recollect that I rode alone the same evening to Bagshot: and it was on that evening, Crawford, that I fell in with you for the first time, as you must remember."

"Indeed—indeed I do!" exclaimed the youth; "and soon—soon was I entangled in the web you wove—entrapped within the snare you laid for me! How did I deceive my mother and my sisters, when they deemed me safe in my chamber, as the guardian of the house during my father's absence!"

"Yes—but the first night I speak of," said Sir George Mornay, "you were at Bagshot on a commission for your mother."

"You need not refresh my memory," returned the youth, while remorse at the moment was strong in his breast. "But I think of the many nights on which I escaped by the window of my chamber, and joined you. Oh! wherefore did you lead me into the paths of vice? wherefore did you involve me in your crimes?" continued Crawford in an impassioned tone; "why did you make me your companion, your associate, your accomplice in all your daring deeds? what benefit did you anticipate receiving from the succour of a boy?"

"Listen, Crawford," pursued the baronet calmly—which very calmness was more torturing to the mind of the youthful impostor than the reader can well conjecture—"listen, and I will explain. I had left your father in London awaiting my decision;—in the mean time I accidentally fell in with his son. An idea struck me, that you might not only be useful to me in my midnight excursions; but that in rendering you a villain, I should have food wherewithal to satisfy the ravenous maw of my vindictive feelings, which craved for ampler vengeance than it had yet been glutted with. Your

family was then spotless, and I was tainted, stained, lost! though none knew that Sir George Mornay was what he was! Accordingly I tutored you, as you know, and kept your father in town by amusing him daily with idle excuses.

"At length Rivingstone informed me that on a certain night—he had been well instructed by some of his agents—there would be food for plunder. It was then that I introduced you to him,—believing you a fit subject, and sufficiently well trained to enter into his plots as well as mine. On the same morning, by accident, I resolved to torment your father once again. I accordingly wrote a letter to assure him that he had better quit London, as I had made up my mind not to see him. For some days before I had so arranged my plans, that the domestics of the hotel in which he resided, being bribed to my interest, intercepted all his communications with his family. This scheme I put in practice for two motives: the first was to read with mine own eyes his sentiments on the cruel suspense in which I kept him; and the second was, that his family might experience the most acute anguish on account of what they must deem to be his alarming silence.

"However, to return.—I introduced you to Rivingstone, a particular expedition being in view. All was planned—all was arranged—you can call to mind how we were disappointed of our prey—"

"But why refer to this?" exclaimed Crawford in agony, clasping his hands together; "do I not know too much of it already?"

"And you must prepare yourself for more," returned Mornay coolly; "it is necessary I should refer to it. You remember, I say, how we were disappointed—that while we were yet deliberating, a single horseman came in sight—that we were resolved to make up with the purse of this individual for the loss of a richer booty—that the traveller came nigh—you must recollect it all—that it was the third milestone—you can remember it, I say—"

"Oh! cease, cease this awful recapitulation, for God's sake—cease, oh! cease, I beseech you!" again cried James, while a cold sweat stood upon his brow, and his heart palpitated violently.

"No—you must listen," continued Sir George Mornay, himself somewhat agitated though he spoke in a low tone of voice. "Crawford, you must listen; for you remember that we stood by the milestone—that the traveller advanced—that he resisted us with nerve and energy—that we heard others on the road—and you remember, James Crawford, that you stabbed him!"

"Oh! God of heaven—God forgive me!" exclaimed James, sinking back in his chair, and covering his face with his hands, as if to drive from his memory a picture far too vividly painted.

"Wine, take wine!" cried the baronet, emptying one of the glasses that stood upon the table.

"This is death!" was all the answer.

Mornay heeded him not; but after a moment's pause, and in spite of the wretched youth's mental anguish, he continued in the same low, solemn, and emphatic tone to address his unhappy victim:—

"Yes—you murdered him—you struck the fatal blow; and we threw him into the ditch. Listen, for you must remember all—and you do remember that we were obliged to retreat across

the fields—that an hour afterwards, I alone—yes I alone returned to the spot—that I went to reconnoitre the fatal place—the grey of morning was sufficient to render all neighbouring objects visible: in the ditch lay the dead man—a cold chill came over me—a beam of approaching day fell upon his countenance, those wan features too well known to me since youth easily to be forgotten—Crawford, I discovered—Oh! listen—I discovered the features of your father!”

“Parricide! Parricide! What? am I then a parricide? was it the author of my being whom I assisted to destroy? Oh! yes—it was—it was—all is now unveiled! Cruel man! worse than monster,” continued Crawford in a hollow voice, half choked with internal suffering: “through all this labyrinth of crime have I been led by you!”

“Silence, poor fool!” interrupted Mornay: did I not say that you were far more guilty than I? did I not warn you to support a detail of horrors?—Listen to the rest!”

Crawford obeyed mechanically; his reason was for the moment half destroyed by the terrible communication Sir George Mornay had made to him: his eyes were fixed, as if gazing intently upon some object before him:—but he saw nothing. One subject alone occupied his thoughts—one subject alone filled his bosom: that he was a PARRICIDE!

The baronet lost no time in concluding the dreadful catalogue of crimes which he had to relate.

“I was not sorry for the deed that had been committed: I felt sure it never could be detected—my vengeance was partially appeased—but only partially. Now I was resolved to see the distress of the family I had so deeply injured. To accomplish this end, on your return from your visit to London (where I, of course, refused you admittance to my house), you obeyed me in relating the tale of your having been attacked by robbers, and of my timely interference:—thus I obtained admittance to your mother’s dwelling; and feigning the sympathy of a friend, I feasted upon her woe!”

“I cast my eyes upon Emily—your sister, Emily—and lust inflamed my soul. I allowed your mother a small income, that she might subsist so as to keep her son to answer my purposes, and assist me in all my exploits—and her daughter to be one day surrendered to my arms. I thus suffered time to glide away, living chiefly on the loans I obtained from such men as Mr. Nathaniel, and on the precarious fruits of our nocturnal exploits.

“But my thirst for vengeance against the whole family of him who was in youth my successful rival, was destined to taste a new pleasure. Conceive my delight, when your mother informed me that you could not be my heir; that none of the hated race of my cousin should inherit my name! The certificate was lost; but, James, it is here! That Rivingstone, our accomplice, our friend—that Rivingstone was Wescott, the parson! Here, here, is the paper—and it is mine!” he added, as with a fiendish laugh he drew it from his pocket-book, and held it to the eyes of the youth whom he was thus torturing with such demoniac energy.

But James regarded not the paper—he cared

not for the title, the wealth, nor the dignities of a thousand empires: his mind was still brooding upon one awful subject—one soul-absorbing conviction—one terrible sentiment—that he was a PARRICIDE!

Sir George Mornay cast his eyes deliberately over the document, gave one smile of satisfaction, and calmly threw it upon the fire, where it was soon reduced to tinder.

“Now,” proceeded the baronet, “our interview is nearly over: let me sum up the various ways in which my thirst for vengeance has been gratified. Let me ponder on the misery I caused him who rivalled, who wounded, who disgraced me—let me think on his death—cut off in the meridian of his years, by the hand of his own son—that son reduced to infamy and disgrace—his mother heart-broken—his sister ruined, debauched—Oh! all this is sweet—sweet as the smile of a lovely girl to her anxious and adoring swain. And now, youth, go—depart! my tale is told—you have no more to hear!”

“Sir George Mornay,” said Crawford, a deadly paleness on his countenance, and his lips quivering, “you think to have entirely unnerved me by this recital?”

“If, after being proved a Parricide, you have courage thus to speak, your heart is hard indeed!”

“No—no—although that heart be nearly broken, there is still one sinew—one fibre unbruised! There is still that energy remaining, which compels me to call you to an account for all your crimes—your injustice towards my family, your villany towards my sister, and your ruin of me!”

The baronet, who had expected a somewhat different result to the interview, was rather startled at this address: he soon, however, recovered his wonted coolness, and prepared to listen attentively to whatever the youth might have to say.

“We two must not continue to live in the world at the same time,” proceeded Crawford; “one of us must perish; and whichever that may be, is not for us to decide beforehand: fate has determined that one must fall!”

“Ah! is it thus that you would die?” exclaimed Sir George Mornay.

“Do not take me for an idiot: you shall stand an equal chance with me on the fatal field.”

“As you please, Crawford,” returned the baronet, with his strange frigidity of manner. “I have before said as much—and since you are resolved to provoke destruction—”

“Yes,” exclaimed the youth, rising from his seat, and regarding the baronet fixedly in the countenance, “one of us must fall! Nor will we have witnesses to our combat—we must be alone!”

“That is what I would have said,” observed Mornay.

“There is no alternative,” proceeded James; “I cannot live, if you live; if I die, it matters not what becomes of you: if you fall, I shall rejoice!”

“I understand you—we must fight till death decide the battle: but you will not find me backward in giving you that satisfaction. However, young man,” continued Mornay, in an impressive tone of voice, “attend to my words, and reflect well before you act.”

"I have reflected—no more consideration is necessary."

"Nay—hear me: I advise you to make all arrangements that you have to make; for as there is an earth beneath us, and perhaps a heaven above us, you will not quit the ground alive."

"That is my affair," said James contemptuously.

"Ponder it, then," was the laconic injunction.

"I have already declared my resolutions: as for the vain threat, that I shall not leave the ground alive, I might as well, and with as much reason, assert, in retaliation, the same to you."

"Well, well—we will not dispute upon trifles, since a more serious discussion is to take place between us: once again, I say, take my advice; make your arrangements, as if your last moments were arrived. Remember, we have no witnesses—not even a surgeon: 't is your request—and we meet alone."

"We meet alone—but where?" said Crawford.

"Where?—aye, that I had not thought of. Stay—'t is decided! I remember that towards the northern extremity of this island there is a large open tract, called Lancresse Common: let it be our *rendez-vous*, and let the spot be the very highest mound or cliff, which joins the sea—you cannot mistake. The waves of the ocean lash against the farthest side of the common—that side is composed of rocks."

"Agreed!" cried James; "and the time shall be to-morrow morning, at day-break."

"So be it. I think we have scarcely any more to say."

"No more—be punctual: till the appointed hour fare thee as best thou mayest!"—and with these words James slowly retired from the room, leaving the baronet rather disappointed, though by no means alarmed at the event of their interview.

Sir George Mornay was determined that the next day should be the last for Crawford: he resolved that the youth should disturb his peace no more. Once rid of him, he could prosecute all his plans, all his new schemes—and he had new ones—without incurring a chance of being liable to the dangerous supervision of him who already knew too much. He did not dread the result of the duel; he had made up his mind with the calm resolve so characteristic of him, to act in a certain manner; and he doubted not of success. Besides, who can tell, but that he intended some foul play towards his youthful competitor?

Crawford returned to Payne's hotel, and shut himself up in his chamber. Terrible were his reflections! But it is not necessary to describe them;—for they may be all summed up by reminding the reader that James Crawford had that morning heard that he was a Parricide!

Hours passed away;—and at last he suddenly recollected that he had no pistols; and he dared not trust to the chance of Mornay's taking two with him. It was now near ten in the evening—but the shops were not shut up. Wrapping his cloak around him, he issued from the hotel, and sought the High Street to discover a gunsmith. He soon found the shop that he required, and entered in haste to make his purchase.

There was another customer standing at the counter, his back towards the door, who was him-

self bargaining for a pair of handsome pistols, which the gunsmith recommended. On hearing the sounds of footsteps, he turned round, and started: Crawford recognised Henry Hunter! In his sudden surprise, he addressed the surgeon:—had he considered a moment, he would have avoided the interview, knowing full well that he must be an object of degradation to all his former acquaintances.

"Ah! Mr. Crawford," said Hunter coolly.

"Silence, I implore you; breathe not my name—wait till we are alone," whispered the youth.

Hunter said nothing, but completed his bargain, paid for the pair of pistols, and concealed them about his person with considerable caution: he then seated himself patiently, until the impostor should be disengaged.

"It is singular," said James, addressing the gunsmith, "that I should come on exactly the same errand as this gentleman,"—pointing to Hunter,—"whom I recognised as an old acquaintance the moment I entered the shop. Show me a pair of your best pistols."

"Duelling pistols, sir?"

"If you please."

"The fellows to those I just sold that gentleman, sir, are the best I can recommend," returned the gunsmith, hesitating slightly at the singularity of the two individuals arriving at his shop for similar purposes, and at the same moment.

"Allow me to inspect them," said James, astonished that Mr. Hunter should have required such instruments; while the young surgeon's wonder and curiosity were also excited at the purchase about to be made by the youthful impostor so late at night.

"I will warrant them," observed the shopkeeper, seeing that James had placed a heavy purse upon the counter.

It was impossible to prove the pistols that evening: Crawford took the man's word for their excellence; and having paid liberally for them, he beckoned to Hunter, who followed him to the hotel.

When they were seated in Crawford's apartment, Hunter was the first to break the silence which had prevailed during their walk from the gunsmith's shop thither.

"Mr. Crawford, you will excuse me, if I cannot give you my hand as cordially as was my wont: you know there are circumstances—"

"Yes, Mr. Hunter—but we need not now allude to them: they regard me alone;—if I have done wrong, 't is I that suffer, not you; and if you choose to adopt a certain distant manner of conduct towards me, we had better separate, as I have nothing to communicate, and nothing to ask of you."

"It may often happen, sir, that two individuals can meet to confer on matters regarding themselves, or families, without being in any degree friendly or intimate," said Hunter.

"Acknowledging this truth, I am however at a loss to conceive what we can particularly have to consult about," remarked James.

"Pardon me. Of the past, as relating to yourself, I have not a word to say: but may I ask—the question is somewhat blunt—wherefore you have come to Guernsey?"

"When I am informed of the object of this query, sir," returned James, "I shall answer it—and not till then."

"Of course you are not bound to reply to my queries: but are you aware that Mr. Arnold is in the island?"

"Ah! indeed!" exclaimed Crawford, scarcely knowing what to reply.

"He is at present in this island," continued Hunter; "and it was my intention to inquire after him to-night. Moreover, Mr. Crawford, are you aware that Sir George Mornay and Arnold are the same person?"

"And if they be, sir, does that regard you or me at this moment?" demanded James impatiently.

"Tell me, are you friendly with Sir George Mornay?" proceeded the surgeon, not heeding his companion's peevishness. "Be assured, my aim in asking these questions is not the gratification of mere idle curiosity: I am the friend of your family—the friend of your mother—the friend of your sister Emily—one who will never suffer either of them to be wronged! As such I am justified in questioning you."

"And as such, I shall reply to you as suits me best," returned Crawford, softening in his manner. "I do know that Sir George Mornay has frequently borne the name of Arnold, when it suited his purposes; I do know that he is in Guernsey—and what is more, sir—I also know that he is the base seducer of my sister!"

"O God! you know it! And wherefore," cried Hunter, fearful lest the weapon of vengeance should be snatched from his hand to be wielded by that of Crawford—"wherefore, may I ask, those pistols? wherefore those instruments of death?"

"To shoot the villain who has seduced my sister," returned James, rising hastily from his chair. "To rid the world of the villain who has made me what I am, who drew me from the paths of rectitude to the ways of crime, who has blasted my character, who has heaped misery on my mother, who has beguiled my sister, who has done all, all he could to trample us in the dust, and reduce us to the level—aye, below the level of the vilest of mankind!"

"Yes—he has done all that, the cowardly miscreant!" ejaculated Hunter, his honest indignation getting the better of his patience. "It was my intention to have brought him to account; but as you are the brother of Emily—to you, however involuntarily, must I of course resign the right of avenging her wrongs."

"Yes—'tis for me to punish her seducer," said James.

"And the place of encounter?" inquired Hunter.

"That remains a secret," replied Crawford. "We are to fight alone, without witnesses. Let the affair remain at present locked up in your own breast; speak not of my arrival in Guernsey to my mother—much less of the anticipated duel. Should I survive, I will throw myself at her feet: should I die, you may act as seems good to you. And now excuse me if I hint that it is my wish to be alone," added James unceremoniously. "You can tell Emily—"

"Emily! have you seen her? does she know of your arrival?" exclaimed Hunter.

"She does," replied Crawford. "Still you are not obliged to make her acquainted with my intentions regarding Sir George Mornay: give her hopes of my shortly visiting her; and say—but no matter—it was not my fault if I missed my appointment."

"What appointment? did she expect you? You speak in inexplicable riddles."

"No wonder, since my mind is occupied with a thousand conflicting ideas," said James. "But, as I feel confident of success in my encounter with Sir George Mornay, I shall doubtless by twelve o'clock be at the house of Mrs. Pembroke."

"Of Lady Mornay, you would say."

"Lady Mornay, how? what would you infer?" exclaimed Crawford.

"That the lady, generally known in Guernsey as Mrs. Pembroke, with whom your mother and sister are residing, is none other than Lady Mornay, the injured wife of your present foe!" replied the young surgeon.

"Can she be in Guernsey?"

"She is. And it was to settle some pecuniary arrangements with her, that her husband came hither."

"Those pecuniary arrangements shall never be settled!" cried James solemnly, as he waved his hand for the surgeon to depart.

"May God be with you!" ejaculated Hunter; and in another minute Crawford was alone.

James now proceeded to examine his pistols; and he actually felt a delight in handling those instruments of slaughter. At length he retired to his couch, where a feverish slumber visited his eyes.

The morning arose dark and gloomy. A sharp sleet rattled against the windows—clouds obscured the face of heaven—and a pinching cold air did not serve to cheer the spirits of the impostor. He arose hastily; and finding, by his watch, that the hour of sun-rise was not far distant, he threw his cloak about him, took his pistols, and set out on his walk towards the place appointed for the meeting.

He arrived on Lancrese Common, and cast his eyes towards the northern extremity, against which the ocean was lashing with a dismal howl; for the wind had risen, and the din of the waves was audible at a considerable distance. A deep mist was gradually spreading itself over the surface of the common, and threatened to veil the whole neighbourhood in darkness. Vainly did James now seek to discern the loftiest hillock—the mists increased, more and more—and it soon became dangerous for him to proceed. Still he moved forward till the vicinity of the waters was discovered by their roar.

Meantime Sir George Mornay had also risen, and set out on his way towards the appointed place. Unfortunately he was half an hour behind his time; and the passing mist, which had involved Crawford in its gloom at the extremity of the common, now beat in the face of the baronet, ere he had completed half the distance thither. Presently it passed away; and Sir George hurried on with the benefit of the morning's light. He lifted up his eyes, and noticed the mark he had named as the place of the fatal meeting in anticipation—a high mound, which was terminated towards the sea by craggy and perpendicular, but low rocks.

Thither did Sir George Mornay hie: but Crawford was not there!

He wandered backwards and forwards; still he saw not the object of his search.

He gazed around him; no one was nigh: he looked to the right, and he looked to the left; and he stood alone on the summit of the hill.

The mound was exposed to the bleak winds; and beneath it rolled the ocean, that boiled over the pointed rocks below.

By accident the baronet cast a glance towards the sea: a cloak was floating on the surface of the waters—now receding from, now approaching, the land—the sport of each wayward billow.

Mornay recognised that garment but too well: it was the last trace of the PARRICIDE!

CHAPTER LIX.

The web is wove; the work is done!

GRAY.

UNKNOWN to Crawford, Hunter had slept at Payne's hotel: for the surgeon was anxious concerning the result of the anticipated meeting between James and the baronet. He passed many gloomy hours after the grey dawn had appeared, —saying to himself at intervals, "Now they have probably arrived—perhaps the ground is already measured—who can tell but that they are about to fire?"—and making a thousand conjectures as to the movements of the hostile parties. Little did he guess—little did he imagine the mysterious event that closed the affair for ever!

Ten o'clock came, but Crawford came not with it: the young surgeon began to be rather alarmed. He would not dare unfold to the already too deeply-afflicted mother his suspicions of her son's fate, should that son fail to return to the hotel in a reasonable time. Suspense like this was horrible. Hunter sincerely—most sincerely hoped that his fears would prove eventually unfounded, and that the villain Mornay would perish instead of the young man who had been ruined by his devices.

Hour after hour passed; and at length the bell of the town-church, at the bottom of the High Street, proclaimed mid-day, at which period Crawford had expected to be with his mother and sister in Lady Mornay's abode: but Hunter had waited until now, rightly judging that if James were successful in his combat, he would, of course, return to the hotel, to recover his composure, ere he presented himself to his parent and Emily. Twelve had struck—and the surgeon, whose alarm was increasing every moment, resolved to tarry no longer; for he began to think it probable that James—if he were indeed still alive—might have proceeded direct from the place of meeting to Lady Mornay's house. Thither, therefore, did Hunter resolve to hasten without delay. He ordered a post-chaise and in a short time was set down at the dwelling of his friend.

Emily was anxiously expecting his arrival; for she could not dispel the idea from her mind, that his absence was caused by some circumstance connected with Sir George Mornay, or with James.

She ran to meet him in the hall, and led him to a parlour, ere he ascended the stairs to greet the other ladies.

"I have seen your brother, Emily: late last night did we separate, after a long conference together," said Hunter.

"Had he seen Sir George Mornay, Henry?" she demanded.

"He is acquainted with all regarding that villain," replied the surgeon, trying to evade a direct answer to her question.

"For God's sake, tell me—tell me, Henry, my friend—conceal nothing from me," exclaimed the poor girl, rushing forward, and grasping her companion's hand—"do you think my brother's passion will carry him beyond the bounds of prudence? have you any fears on this head?"

"Oh! no—I expect him at the house every minute," said Hunter, deliberating how to satisfy the numerous questions he doubted not Emily would put to him.

"Thank God! he is safe, then—he will not quarrel with Sir George Mornay! Have you spoken to him this morning? Will he see his mother?"

"He will come and throw himself at her feet," returned Hunter, answering the last question hastily, in order to avoid the necessity of telling a falsehood with regard to the other.

"And she will forgive him all, I am confident!" cried Emily.

"He will throw himself at her feet—demand her pardon for all his delinquencies; and he will promise in future to be every thing she can fondly anticipate!" continued the surgeon.

"My poor mother!" said Emily, in a sorrowful tone of voice. "She has indeed been unhappy in her children! Now she can look for comfort to Catherine alone; Catherine is the only one that is virtuous—the only one of the three that is spotless!"

"And Emily shall still be a comfort to her mother," exclaimed the young man, as he gazed earnestly on her countenance. "But come—let us ascend to the drawing-room;"—and, taking her hand, he led her thither.

Lady Mornay and Mrs. Crawford received him in their usually cordial manner; but their woe-begone countenances produced so painful an impression upon the young man that he walked towards the window, to conceal his feelings. But he started back, as if a scorpion had stung him to the quick;—for moving up the gravel-walk, that intersected the shrubbery, was Sir George Mornay, enveloped in his cloak, and advancing in a hurried manner towards the house. Hunter gave vent to an involuntary ejaculation; the ladies ran to the window; and each one recognised the profligate baronet as he approached the dwelling.

"To me be it now!" said Hunter, hastening towards the door, all the wrongs of Emily fresh in his mind.

"Stop—stop!—whither are you going?" exclaimed the unhappy girl, throwing herself forward, and catching him by the arm.

"For God's sake, involve yourself in no quarrel with my husband, young man; as you value yourself—as you respect the rights of hospitality—as you desire to preserve that esteem I have for you!" cried Lady Mornay, joining in the solicitations of

Emily; but their prayers were vainly expended; the injuries of the latter alone dwelt in the memory of the intrepid young man.

"I shall return immediately!" he cried; and disengaging himself from the grasp of the almost frantic girl, who strove to detain him, he rushed out of the room.

"Great God have mercy upon me!" said Emily, clasping her hands together in bitterness of heart; "he is gone—gone to rush upon destruction!"

Not a word more was spoken on either side—they looked at each other in horrified suspense, and appeared to anticipate some deadly result. The state of their minds was more terrible than can be expressed. Grief was dumb—not a tear was shed—not a moan was heard; but despair was depicted on each countenance. Neither of the ladies dared move from the apartment, though they dreaded a serious result; even Lady Mornay herself was fixed motionless to her seat, notwithstanding her husband's life was probably compromised at that very instant.

Meantime Hunter sallied forth, and confronted Sir George Mornay in his path,—exclaiming, "I see that James Crawford—whose ruin was caused by you—who has nearly broken the heart of one of the most affectionate of mothers—I apprehend that James Crawford is no more! Oh! your silence—your manner confirm my suspicion! And therefore it remains for me to punish you as you deserve!"

"I should suspect," said Sir George Mornay, "that the laws of Guernsey are similar to those of England, for the protection of individuals: and I cannot imagine, Mr. Hunter, wherefore I should thus be waylaid."

"Waylaid," exclaimed the indignant young man; "follow me, sir—that is, if you have a spark of the courage remaining for which you have been notorious."

"Whither should I follow you, and for what purpose? Do you suppose I am to engage myself in a quarrel, or idle broil, with every extravagant boy who has been crossed in love?" asked Mornay, his lip wearing a contemptuous sneer.

"Wretch—villain!" exclaimed Hunter, "recall those words—or——"

"I am not accustomed, sir, to recall that which has once escaped my lips," answered the baronet.

"Then you must account for your expressions!"

"Sir," said Mornay, "I have had no dispute with you, and I know not why I am thus molested."

"You are dared and challenged to a combat, which it appears you would wish to avoid," was the taunting reply. "Do I not stand here to punish you for your crimes? are you not the se-

ducer of Emily? are you not the bane of the family—a family innocent and happy, whom you have destroyed their peace of mind for ever?"

"Ah! fares it thus?" said the baronet, irritated in his turn by the other's imputations, "it is as you say."

"Have you pistols?" inquired Hunter.

"I have not: coming straight from my study hither, I left them behind me, not anticipating such a call for their use."

"Here are mine," said the young surgeon, producing those he had purchased the night before.

"Choose that which you like the best."

"I accept of this," replied Mornay, as he took one from the hand of his foe. "Are they loaded?"

"Both:—or we will reload, if it pleases you."

"By no means, since you gave me my choice. Are we to fight without witnesses?"

"Certainly: it was thus that you arranged to fight with Crawford," was the reply.

"Agreed!" said the baronet:—and they moved farther on, till they arrived at a proper spot, where they halted, and measured their ground.

* * * * *

The ladies in the parlour had not broken the terrible silence in which we left them: their souls were too much stupified by grief and terror to allow the utterance of a syllable.

Presently the sound of a pistol alarmed them: they started up, and with one accord uttered a fearful ejaculation.

A second report followed, louder than the first—their hearts sank within them.

A few minutes elapsed—footsteps were heard ascending the staircase, and Hunter, pale, scarcely able to support himself upon his legs, entered the room, his eyes rolling, as if in frenzied horror.

He tottered towards a chair, and fell upon it exhausted.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Emily, springing forward, and catching firm hold of his head; "what meant those pistols?"

"Your seducer, Emily, is no more," returned the young surgeon solemnly: "that villain has killed him!"

A dreadful scream issued from the lips of Lady Mornay; and she sank senseless upon the floor.

"Heaven be thanked for one thing!" said Emily; "heaven be thanked! at all events we are safe!"

"Oh! no," said Hunter, with a bitter smile, baring his breast at the same time, and displaying a deep wound, which had bled internally: "Ease, Sickness, and Sorrow are disappointed of their prey: in giving his righteous doom, God has punished your seducer, I have myself met Death in the face!"

THE END.



